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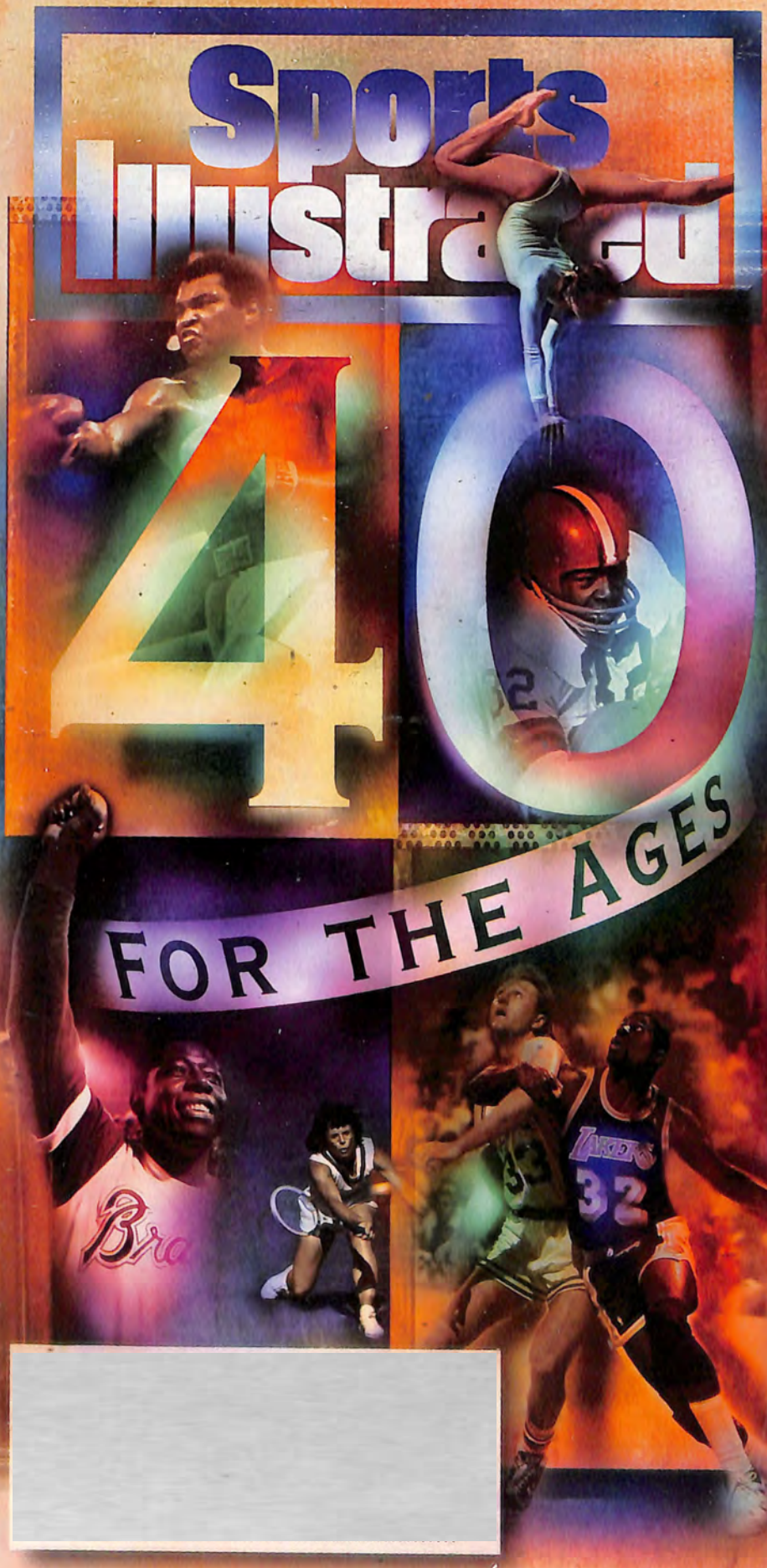
40TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

Sports Illustrated



40

FOR THE AGES

HENRY
Aaron
MUHAMMAD
Ali
ROONE
Arledge
ARTHUR
Ashe
LARRY
Bird
JIM
Brown
PAUL (BEAR)
Bryant
ROBERTO
Clemente
HOWARD
Cosell
GARY
Davidson
JULIUS
Erving
JIM
Fixx
PEGGY
Fleming
DR. HAROLD
Gores
WAYNE
Gretzky
DR. ROBERT
Jackson
MAGIC
Johnson
MICHAEL
Jordan
BILLIE JEAN
King
DON
King
OLGA
Korbut
GREG
LeMond
SUGAR RAY
Leonard
CARL
Lewis
MARK
McCormack
MARVIN
Miller
JOE
Montana
JOE
Namath
MARTINA
Navratilova
JACK
Nicklaus
BOBBY
Orr
ARNOLD
Palmer
...
Pelé
RICHARD
Petty
BILL
Rasmussen
PETE
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PETE
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Wooden

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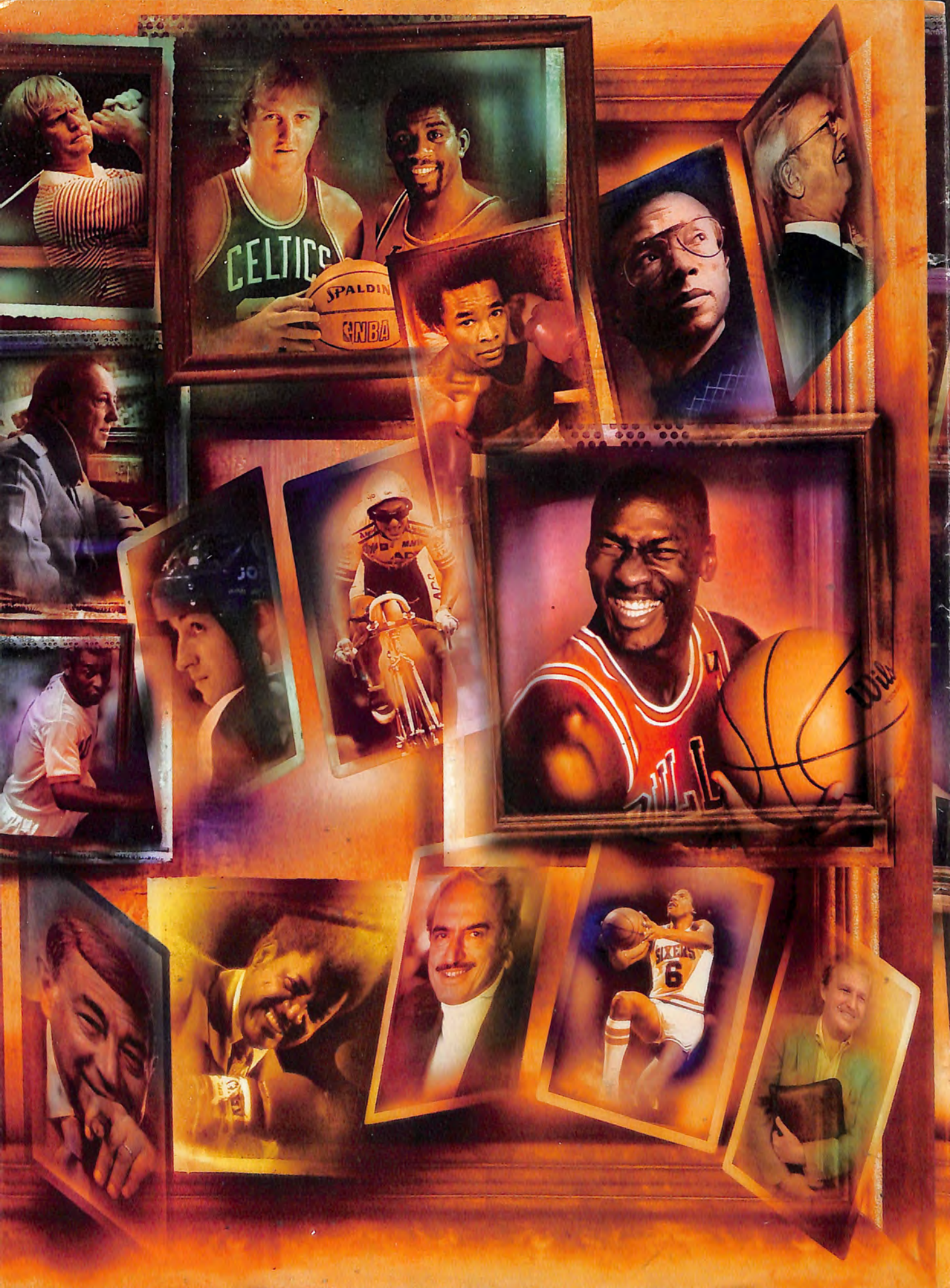
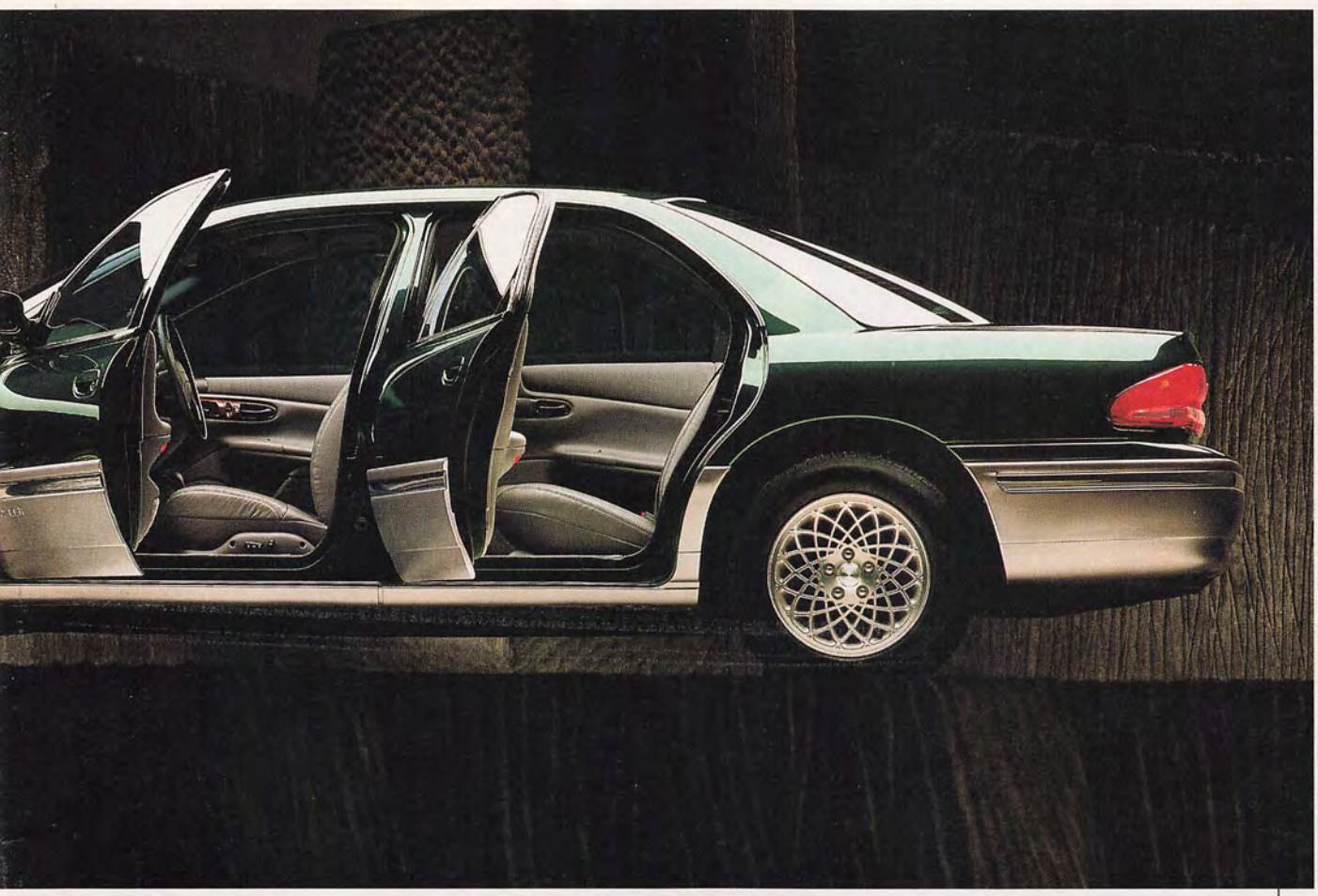

CELTICS
SPALDING
NBA
SIXERS
6

The Center is

Not only was it developed at one of the most advanced vehicle research and development facilities in the world, but each Chrysler Concorde is in itself something of a mobile design center. We suggest you begin with a walk around the grounds. Note the wind-cheating profile of innovative cab-forward design–longer wheelbase, wider track, aggressively raked windshield. As you step in, observe that cab-forward also enlarges the rear doors for easier entry and exit. Once inside the spacious interior, take a hands-on tour of ergonomically placed controls on the instrument panel, seats, doors and ceiling. (Don't miss the dual front seat air bags; they're standard.†) Unseen but effective nonetheless, a spectrum of noise-buffering components is at the ready to keep

Chrysler's Portofino concept car was the first incarnation of cab-forward engineering.



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Chrysler Concorde

form follows function

†Always wear your seat belt.

Still the Greatest

Just as the young Cassius Clay proclaimed his own superlativeness, years later we find that, by any name, he remains No. 1 (page 46).

Sports Illustrated

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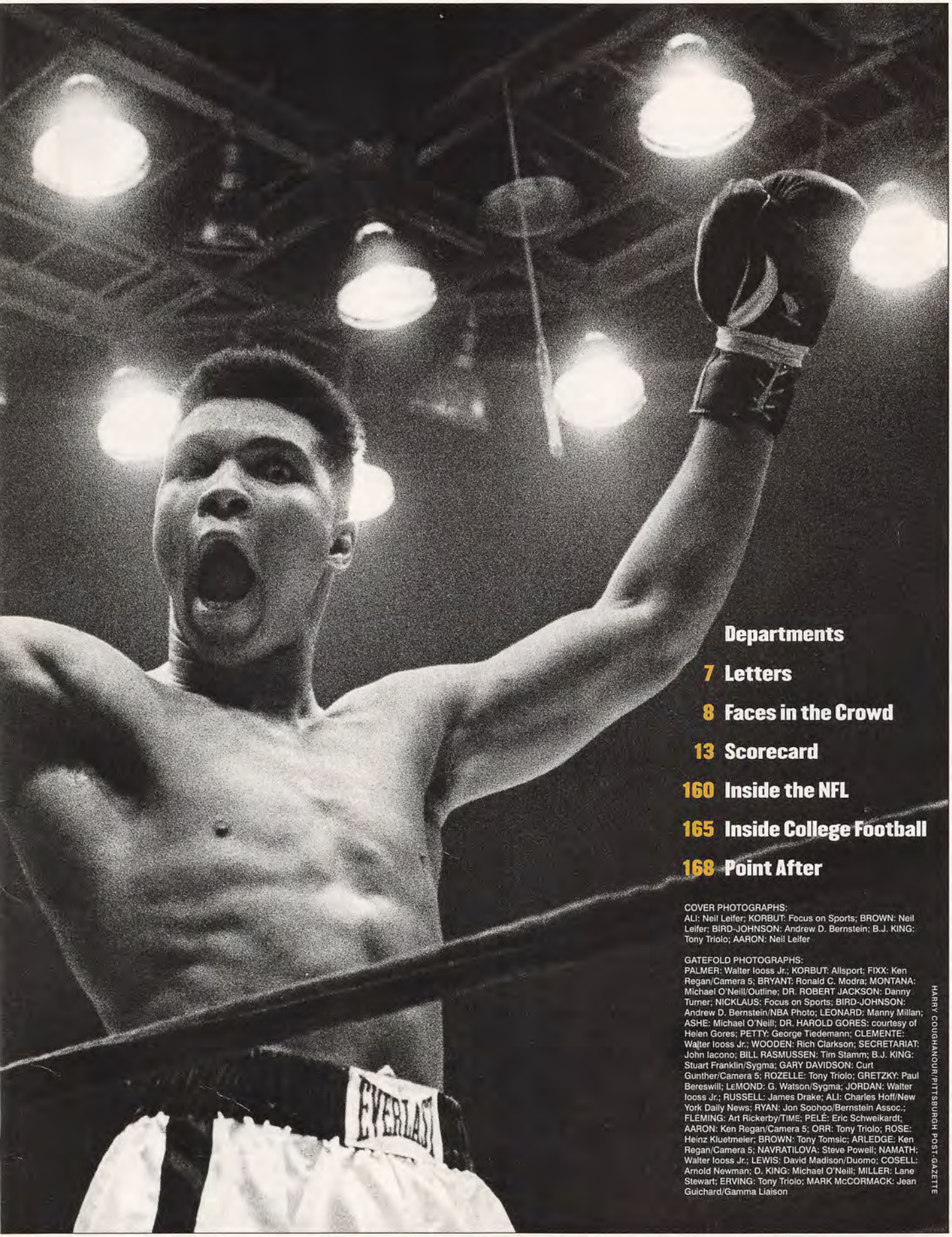

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HARRY COUGHANOUR/PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE

THE COFFEE-STAINED lists curl on the radiator in David Bauer's office. They look like the Dead Sea Scrolls, page after battered page of esteemed names that could not be included in our *40 for the Ages* feature, SI's pantheon of the 40 most significant individuals in sports in the four decades of the magazine's existence *(page 46)*. "Willie Mays and Wilma Rudolph, Flo-Jo and Bo Jackson," recites Bauer, the assistant managing editor who edited the package. "Red Smith and Red Auerbach, Phil Knight and Bobby Knight. . . ." All were casualties of the process.

In January each of our editors and writers was asked to submit a list of 15 candidates for inclusion in *40 for the Ages*. From the more than 300 nominees, the editors eliminated such intriguing contenders as basketball coach Howard (Hobby) Hobson, who advocated the use of the three-point field goal and the shot clock, and point-spread inventor Charles K. McNeil. "We had to ask ourselves, Are we honoring these people on the basis of their achievements or their impact or their long-term influence?" says Bauer. "And the criteria ultimately became all of those things, which leaves us with some names that people are bound to disagree with."

MANNY MILLAN

Bauer's top three: Ginny, Callie and Johnny.

Indeed, at the taping of the companion one-hour prime-time special produced by the magazine's television division, SITV, which aired this week on NBC, host Bob Costas nearly choked when he discovered that neither Mays nor Mickey Mantle had made the list. Among staffers, Bauer was besieged by more last-ditch lobbying than Senate crime-bill opponents ever were. He fairly wept over the eloquent E-mail from a reporter making a magnificent case for Nancy Lopez, and he commiserated with a writer who phoned late one night with an impassioned appeal on behalf of Willie Shoemaker. "The Shoe's gotta be there!" implored the scribe. In the end the Shoe did not fit; Lopez, likewise, missed the cut.

When the list was finally crystallized to a consensus 40, the most difficult task was just beginning. "When it came to actually *ranking* the 40, the arguments became even more heated," Bauer says. "And yet one thing was never in dispute: Muhammad Ali was always Number 1."

Bauer can tell you that Ali began boxing exactly 40 years ago this fall, for the number 40 became his forte this summer. In addition to overseeing *40 for the Ages* and appearing briefly in the TV special, Bauer edited Steve Rushin's voluminous retrospective on the past 40 years in sports, which ran in the Aug. 16 issue. "It was Bauer's inspired idea to run the piece in English, rather than its original Sanskrit," says the self-effacing Rushin.

In fact, about the only 40 with which the fortysomething Bauer is not familiar these days is the 40-hour workweek. In the busy days before this issue closed, Bauer had only sporadic furloughs to his home in Westchester County, N.Y., to see his wife, Ginny, and their children, two-year-old Callie and nine-month-old Johnny. Occasionally during this endeavor, the thoughts of our beleaguered desk jockey wandered to a certain disc jockey. "This Top 40 business is trickier than it looks," says Bauer. "I have a world of new respect for Casey Kasem."

Mark Mulvoy

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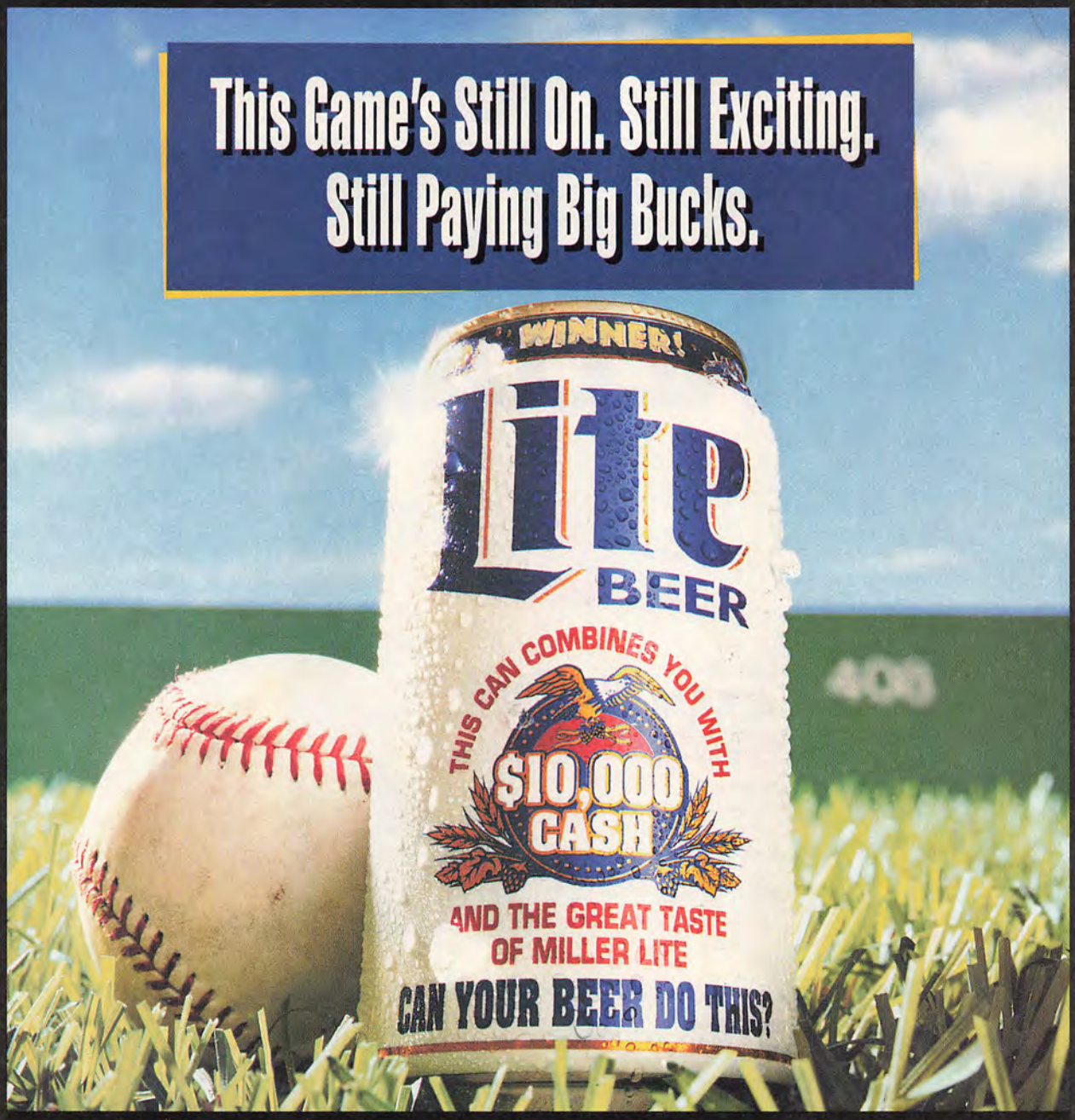

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We Cub fans are down every year about this time. Do you have to mock us? For shame!

PAUL TOEPFER, SPRINGFIELD, ILL.

Fantasy Baseball

I must compliment you on the most creative, humorous and thoroughly enjoyable article ever to appear in your magazine, Richard Hoffer's account of the imaginary finish to the 1994 baseball season (*Too Good to Be True*, Aug. 22). Hoffer's rendition of the exploits of Tony Gwynn, Chuck Knoblauch, Matt Williams and Mitch Williams was hilarious.

JAMES E. ISMAN, *Northfield, N.J.*

If it took the strike to produce Hoffer's article, then I'm all for it. This was heart-pounding reading, the Dream Series between the Boston Red Sox and the Chicago Cubs that my sons and I have always talked about. If baseball is resumed this year, it will be anticlimactic.

GEORGE W. SAMMET, *Acton, Mass.*

Even in the land of make-believe, the Red Sox were denied the big prize. Thanks, SI—for nothing.

ROSS WEILAND, *Forest Hills, N.Y.*

Apparently the Cubs prevailed by having Mark Grace bat out of turn when he hit his home run in Game 6. According to your account of that game, Grace made the second out in the 10th and then homered in the 11th for the Chicago win. By the time Grace's turn would have come up in the 11th, the Cubs would have had to have scored already.

BRYANT STEELE, *Atlanta*

• We've reviewed the tape and the box score of the game, and you're absolutely right. Good catch. Too bad the Red Sox didn't notice at the time.—ED.

How could you have failed to mention David Cone's becoming the first pitcher since Johnny Vander Meer to throw back-to-back no-hitters—and his amazing 23–6 record and American League–leading 2.10 earned run average?

MICHAEL BRANDT, *San Diego*

Who could have asked for a better finish than Cubs versus Red Sox? But Hoffer left out something important. Who were the Cy Young winners, MVPs, Rookies of the Year and Comeback Players of the Year?

PATTERSON SHEDD, *Mobile, Ala.*

Hoffer failed to mention the losing pitcher in the Giants' Oct. 3 playoff-game win over the Dodgers. Could it have been that Los Angeles, in need of bullpen help, re-signed Tom Niedenfuer to pitch in the finale?

DARREN MILLER, *Tipton, Iowa*

License to Dream

At last I can drive my car proudly down the highway.

DAN HORAN, *Pacific Palisades, Calif.*

Although I was disappointed that the Baltimore Orioles did not finish better than they did, thanks for closing the loop on the 1994 season. Just one question: May I assume that Cal Ripken's iron-man streak is still alive?

BILL ESHELMAN, *Arlington, Va.*

• White Sox Frank Thomas and Giant Matt Williams were voted MVPs, Red Sox Roger Clemens and Brave Greg Maddux won the Cy Youngs, and Ranger Jose Canseco and Giant Darryl Strawberry took Comeback Player of the Year honors. Sadly, the Dodgers didn't re-sign Niedenfuer, because they despaired of getting him back in shape. Sadder still, Ripken's iron-man streak ended at 2,030 games when he contracted measles and refused to expose his teammates to the disease. *That's* the kind of guy Ripken is.—ED.

I expected a comprehensive analysis of the strike. Instead, I got an inept attempt at lighthearted journalism that was an insult to intelligent baseball fans everywhere. I'm surprised your cover wasn't Forrest Gump dressed in a Cub uniform and striking out the final batter of the World Series. Give me a break.

GEORGE CHARLSEN, *Baltimore*

Dream Team II

I must disagree with Phil Taylor's statement that the U.S. public will not "tire anytime soon of having its stars demolish the rest of the basketball world" (*Yes, It Was a Joke*, Aug. 22). Winning is the ultimate goal, but it must be done with sportsmanship. Dream Team II acted like thugs. The original Dream Team was made up of stars, while the Team IIers were mostly wannabes. Also, Larry, Magic, Michael & Co. didn't try to humiliate other teams. Watching Shawn Kemp and Derrick Coleman chest-bump and talk trash was an embarrassment. As for Reggie Miller, he may one day be a star, but for now he's a loudmouth with no class or style. Team II was a disgrace.

MARDELL DEVEREUX
Auburn, Calif.

The whole idea of a Dream Team is a bad one. There is nothing less exciting than watching the U.S. beat some other team by 45 points. This not only discourages other countries but hurts the U.S. as well. America should go back to using college players and restore parity to these games.

RICH POLIKOFF, *Hinsdale, Ill.*

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MEQUON, WIS.

Elizabeth Cyganiak

MEQUON, WIS.

MARK HICKS

MARK HICKS

Sarah, 18, defeated Elizabeth, 21, 6–1, 6–4 in an all-sister final in the U.S. national amateur tennis championships. Sarah, who was the top seed in the women's division of the championships and rookie of the year in the Big Ten last spring, broke her older sister's serve three times in the first set and won the second on a break in the final game. A three-time Wisconsin state high school champion and a second-semester freshman at the University of Michigan this fall, Sarah is the No. 1–ranked women's singles player for the Wolverines, while Elizabeth, a senior, is ranked No. 5 on the team.

Miguel Silva

TAMPA

SCOTT HALLERAN

Miguel, 9, defeated Matthew Donofrio of Mars, Pa., in the finals to win the boys' bantam IV division under-30-kilogram title at the national Junior Olympic judo championships. During his 1½ years of competition in the sport, he has also won two state age-group crowns.

Jillian Penque

CORSICANA, TEXAS

KEVIN PAINTER

Jillian, 6, set the U.S. record for six-year-olds in the Presidential Physical Fitness One Mile run when she ran 28 laps around the James L. Collins Catholic School gymnasium in a time of 8:32. A first-grader at Collins, Jillian also plays soccer and basketball.

Blair Lobrano

BAKER, LA.

BILL FEIG

Lobrano, 19, was fifth in the 218-pound class at the junior world weightlifting championships and was the top U.S. finisher. He set American junior records in the snatch (330½ pounds) and total lift (727½) and also lifted 396¾ in the clean and jerk.

Deanne Hemmens

COSTA MESA, CALIF.

ROBERT SPERRY

Hemmens, 30, a meeting planner for a hotel chain, won four gold medals at the U.S. Canoe and Kayak Team Sprint Nationals. She won the 200- and 500-meter single kayak, the 500 double kayak (with Alexandra Harbold of Rockaway Beach, N.Y.) and the 500 four-woman kayak.

The vacation is over.

MERYL STREEP

KEVIN BACON

DAVID STRATHAIRN

THE RIVER WILD

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SEPTEMBER 30th

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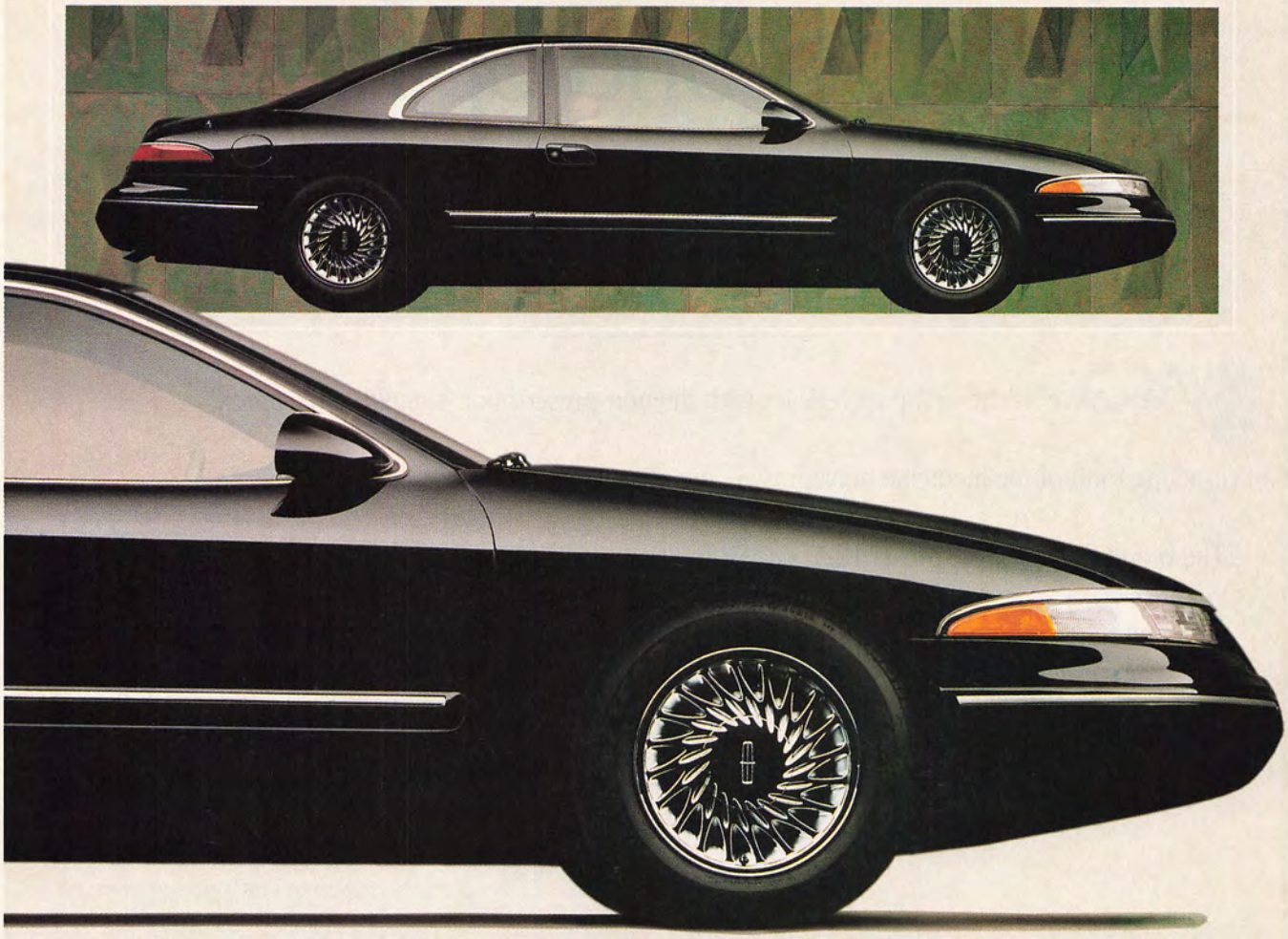

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LINCOLN

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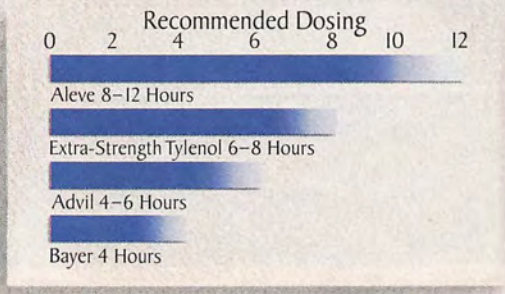

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Scorecard

EDITED BY JACK McCALLUM AND RICHARD O'BRIEN

Priorities on Ice

ONE HAS to wonder if the NHL knows how to deal with prosperity.

After an outstanding 1993–94 season and postseason, during which pro sports' "other" league at last seemed to gain mainstream appeal, the hockey poohbahs sat down to negotiate a network TV contract, settling last week on a five-year, $155 million deal with Fox. The big question is why the NHL spent so much of the off-season talking to TV people and so little time talking to its own players.

The collective bargaining agreement between the NHL and its players' union ended in September 1993 (the 1993–94 season was played without one), and the two sides have had little communication. The league has talked about both a "redistribution of revenue" and a "rookie salary structure," both of which amount to a salary cap, and the players want nothing to do with that. It's a given that the owners are planning to lock out the players right before the season begins on Oct. 1.

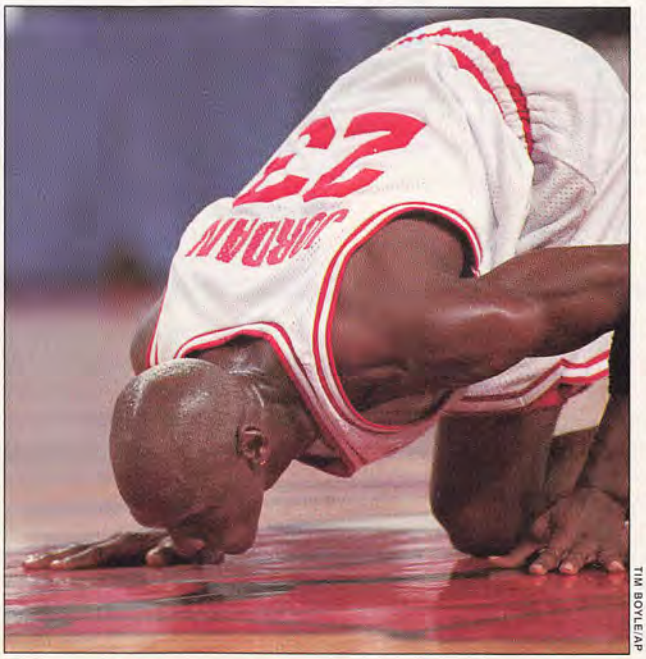
So, what the NHL has right now is a nice new network contract . . . and maybe no games to show.

Still the One

Last Friday night the Birmingham Barons' best-known outfielder took a final curtain call on his old stage before the house comes down. Michael Jordan played basketball in public for the first time since walking away from the Chicago Bulls last fall, joining a group of NBA guards and forwards in the Scottie Pippen Ameritech All-Star Classic, a charity game at doomed Chicago Stadium. Had the man who batted .202 in spikes and stirrups forgotten how to play in shorts and Air Jordans? Does a shark forget how to eat? "I think I showed you guys that if I want to play, I can play," Jordan said.

That was after he had scored a game-high 52 points, run hard and dribbled well, made long jumpers and soft bank shots and gone at the man guarding him, Pippen—perhaps the best man-on-man defensive player in the NBA—with smiling ferocity. Astoundingly yet predictably, the 32-year-old Jordan was the best player on the floor by a wide margin. The youngsters in the game—Anfernee Hardaway, Jason Kidd, Isaiah Rider—got to see firsthand what everyone had been talking about for years.

Jordan came back to pay his respects to the stadium before the 65-year-old Big Barn on Madison Street is plowed under to provide parking for the Bulls' new arena, the United Center, across the street. He did not come back, he insisted, to feed rumors that he'll soon return to the NBA instead of heading, as scheduled, to the Arizona Instructional League. He will play basketball anytime he wants, just not on anyone else's clock, just not for money, just not because he is still the best in the world. "That's a rare freedom," he said.



TIM BOYLE/AP

The freedom he showed in midair—his first dunk was a sudden and vicious display of flying grace that had the sellout crowd of 18,671 laughing with joy—made his continued absence from the NBA almost painful to contemplate. Is there anyone else on the planet who is the best there is at something wonderful and will not perform that something? What if Yo Yo Ma decided to play the cello only behind closed doors or Pavarotti to sing only in the shower? When Jordan walked to center court as the game was ending and knelt and kissed the raging hardwood bull goodbye, those who love basketball could only hope it was just a good-night peck, not a final adieu.

Free Time, Free Fall

With all the new rights and freedoms pro athletes are demanding these days, it is surprising that one restrictive aspect of their contracts has gone unchallenged. Included in every football, basketball, baseball and hockey player's work papers is a section limiting his free-time activities. Some of the no-nos mentioned in the NBA contract, for example, are riding a moped, skydiving, hang gliding, professional wrestling and—believe it or not—tossing around a baseball or a football. That list is preceded by the clause "including but not limited to," an obvious attempt at a legal catchall.

Still, Philadelphia 76er center Shawn Bradley and rookie forward Sharone Wright recently found a way to get a thrill at Atlantic City's Steel Pier, where they plummeted 250 feet toward the ground in a bungee-like contraption called a Skycoaster. Had Bradley (who made out his will on hotel stationery before the ride) or Wright been hurt or even killed, the battle over whether their contracts should be honored would have been interesting. While the daredevil duo could claim that they were

The Fall Lineup

It's almost autumn, the time for football, the World Series (woops!) and, of course, the new television season. We are proud to present a slate of prime-time shows we would like to see, all of which have a distinctly sports flavor.

	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30
Monday	**Tampa Bay Watch** *Backfields are* always *in motion in this sand-and-sun drama of hard-luck, hard-bodied Florida footballers.*		**Chicago Hopeless** *New, heart-wrenching drama follows the fortunes of the Second City's National League baseball team.*	**Hangin' with Henry Cooper** *This BBC import chronicles the feel-good frolics of an aging, lantern-jawed heavyweight bleeder.*	**Law and Oerter** *Former Pittsburgh Pirate hurler Vern Law and four-time Olympic discus champ Al Oerter prove to be an unlikely crime-fighting duo.*	
Tuesday	**Dome Improvement** *The adventures of a Seattle-based baseball team in its ramshackle domicile.*	**The Lanny** *A ribald romp through the PGA Tour with a profane, polyester-drenched player.*	**Harried with Children** *Scarlet-sweatered coach at a Midwestern university molds young men with back-to-basics disciplinary techniques such as swearing, head-butting and chair-tossing.*		**PeteRose Place** *The eternally boyish Hall of Fame wannabe chats about batting tips and the weekly line with a rotating cast of Big Red Machinists.*	
Wednesday	**The Deion Sanders Show** *Guess what's topic Numero Uno on the new talk show hosted by the self-promoting, two-sport superstar? "I can promise you this—there'll be plenty of talk about Deion Sanders," says the host. Hey, now!*		**Blunder Alley** *The weekly misadventures of a pro basketball team, set in a row of offices owned by the Los Angeles Clippers.*	**My So-called Team** *A weekly call-in show hosted by Cincinnati Bengal general manager Mike Brown.*	**The Sampsons** *Long-tressed, barrel-chested Biblical figure and his irritating hairdresser girlfriend move in with 7'4" basketball center in this cutting-edge,* Full House*–esque animated sitcom.*	
Thursday	**20 Minutes** *A documentary detailing the weekly training regimen of heavyweight George Foreman.*	**Frazier** *NBA icon trots out Superfly fashions under baleful gaze of fuddy-duddy brother and old-fashioned dad.*	**Grace under Mirer** *Sparks fly when an NFL quarterback takes charge of the Chicago Cubs and attempts to "manage" their star first baseman.*		**Southern Exposure** *From the true-life files of David Berst: A bungling band of NCAA investigators doggedly tries to uncover shenanigans in the Sunshine State.*	
Friday	**Canseco, Texas Ranger** *A heavily muscled cleanup hitter enforces the peace with a Louisville Slugger.*		**M.A.N.T.L.E.** *Baseball legend gone partially to seed tries to reclaim past glories that once left spectators bug-eyed.*	**Empty Vest** *A behind-the-scenes peek into the comic world of the baseball commissioner's office.*	**Tales from the Gypped** *Grisly vignettes from the empty lives of jilted pro hockey fans in a North Country city that strongly resembles Minneapolis.*	

JEFF WONG

not, after all, doing something as perilous as, say, running pass patterns, we assume that the 76ers would deem Skycoastering an "included but not limited to" activity.

What is more fascinating is the list of seven pastimes expressly permitted in the NBA contract: golf, tennis, handball, swimming, hiking, softball and volleyball. You call these innocuous activities? Tennis brings the likelihood of tennis elbow, handball a guarantee of jammed fingers. People drown when they swim and get eaten by bears when they hike. Softball and volleyball (the beach kind, anyway) are played under the specter of skin cancer. As for golf, well, everyone knows that that activity can lead to mental illness.

Unforced Error

Last week the Women's Tennis Council announced that it will install new age limits for participation on the women's pro tour, beginning on Jan. 1. The limits, which will further restrict tour participation by teenage girls, come in the wake of evidence that the current schedule—girls as young as 14 may play as many as 12 tour events and the year-ending Virginia Slims championships—can, in the words of the council's Age Eligibility Commission, lead to "serious medical, psychological and developmental problems."

Under the new rules 14-year-old girls will be barred from tour events, but starting at 15, they will be permitted to enter an increasing number of tournaments each year until they can play an unlimited schedule at 18. Along the way they and their parents and coaches will be required to take part in counseling.

Sounds great, right? But consider that 14-year-old girls will still be allowed to retain agents and to play four satellite events and one exhibition. Worse, in a kind of granddaughter clause, any player turning 14 this year, like Martina Hingis of Switzerland and the U.S.'s Venus Williams, can be exempted from the new rules if they enter a tour event in 1994.

Why? Because the council says it wouldn't be fair to these players to change the ground rules as they are about to embark on their careers. More likely, fear of lawsuits is a factor. Indeed, Anne Person Worcester, managing director of the council, spent nine hours meeting with Venus's father, Richard, at his home in Florida, going over the proposed eligibility guidelines.

As desperate as the tour is for new faces, it makes no sense to let this next set of phenoms repeat the same mistakes just because they might be on the verge of stardom. The phase-in program is the right idea, but there should be no exceptions.

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RICHARD LEUTZINGER

There Will Always Be an England

TO JUDGE by this sign, spotted beside a motorway rest stop in Manchester, England, it would seem that the British have the right idea (although we might have included basketball coaches as well). But, alas, things are not as they seem. In Britain a "coach" is what Americans call a bus, and "football" is, of course, soccer. A football coach, then, is a busload of soccer fans.

A Rafting Angle

Let the rest of the nation agonize over the issue of Cuban refugees—Florida fishermen see opportunity in the freedom seekers' rickety rafts. It's an angling axiom that small bait fish are attracted to floats because they afford shade from the hot summer sun and protection from predators. And it's also a fact that where there are little fish, there are big fish looking for their next meal. So. . . .

"There's a saying down here that if you see a Cuban raft, the first thing you do is fish the raft," says Steve Hartman, 32, owner of Garden Cove Marina in Key Largo. "That's where you'll find the dolphin and the tuna." Last Saturday, Hartman and his crew encountered a group of Cubans on a raft waiting for help from the Coast Guard. "We pulled up and waited with them," says Hartman, "and while we were waiting, we fished the raft."

And what did the Cubans on the raft do? "They watched us," says Hartman.

Riders in the Storm

Before last Saturday's Nebraska–Texas Tech game in Lubbock, a moment of silence was offered in memory of Double T, the victim of a field goal celebration gone horribly wrong. The black quarter horse had served more than a year as the Red Raiders' mascot only to meet his untimely end in the third quarter of Tech's Sept. 3 opener against New Mexico.

For 40 years a horse and a Masked Rider, a student decked out in a scarlet cape, have celebrated Red Raider scores at Jones Stadium by galloping a lap around the field. By unhappy coincidence, Sept. 3 marked a reunion of Masked Riders, 17 of whom took the field in a pregame ceremony. During a lap after a third-quarter field goal had put Tech up 20-17, Double T's saddle slipped, and rider Amy Smart could not hold on. She was not seriously injured, but Double T was spooked. He dashed toward the Red Raider bench, scattering players, coaches and officials. The frightened horse then raced down the sideline and out the south end zone before slipping and falling headfirst into a concrete wall just inside the exit tunnel. Death was instantaneous.

The tragedy overshadowed the Red Raiders' 37-31 win and provoked fresh calls for the abolition of the Masked Rider. In 1982 Happy VI, Masked Rider Perry Church up, flattened an SMU cheerleader, and two years ago another Masked Rider collided with a game official. Last week the university's Masked Rider Committee voted unanimously to continue the Masked Rider tradition, but it recommended the formation of an ad hoc committee to review safety issues. One possible outcome: a ban on laps after scores. Horse and rider would simply stand there, in the committee's words, "as a symbol of Texas Tech."

By week's end a decision—unlike poor Double T—had yet to be rendered.

No Hit, Good Man

Journeyman pitcher Hank Aguirre, who died last week of prostate cancer at age 62, achieved his most lasting fame off the field. In 1979, nine years after he had pitched his final major league game, Aguirre (uh-GEAR-ay) mortgaged his home and borrowed $350,000 to establish Mexican Industries, in Detroit, where he had spent 10 seasons of his 16-year career pitching for the Tigers. His company, which manufactures air bags, wheel covers and map holders, now employs 1,000 workers, 87% of them Hispanic, at eight plants.

Aguirre was also known for being one of the worst hitters in history. During home games Detroit fans would sometimes cheer him just for hitting a foul ball. Non-Hammerin' Hank's "batting" average of .08505 (he had 33 hits in 388 at bats), however, is not the alltime low. Pitchers Dean Chance (44 hits in 662 at bats for a .066 average), Bill Hands (37 for 472, .078 average) and Roger Craig (38 for 448, .08482 average) were all worse. And New York Yankee reliever Terry Mulholland will possibly join this esteemed group—his average stands at .079 with 28 hits in 356 at bats.

All in all, though, three-time All-Star Aguirre had reason to be mighty proud. He didn't get paid to hit, and his career record was a respectable 75–72. Best of all, he made a difference. "He was a real part of the Detroit community," says former Tiger radio broadcaster Ernie Harwell. There are fewer and fewer players like that around.

This Week's Sign That the Apocalypse Is Upon Us

CALLING THE move "a phenomenon of entertainment and sports," Amateur Athletic Union president Bobby Dodd announced that his organization will relocate its headquarters from Indianapolis to Disney World.

They Said It

Brett Hull

The St. Louis Blue right wing, on his ambivalence about requesting a trade: "I'll be sad to go, and I wouldn't be sad to go. It wouldn't upset me to leave St. Louis, but it would upset me to leave St. Louis. It's hard to explain. You'll find out one of these days, but maybe you never will."

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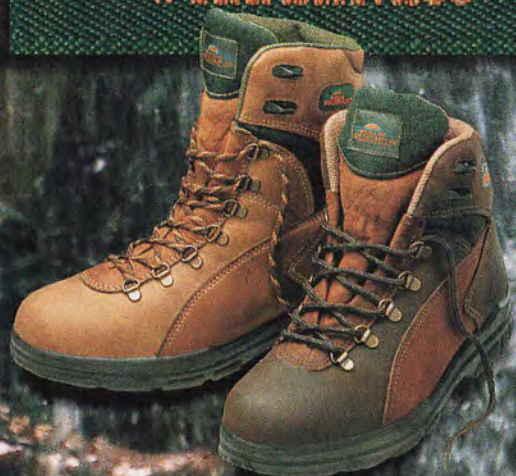

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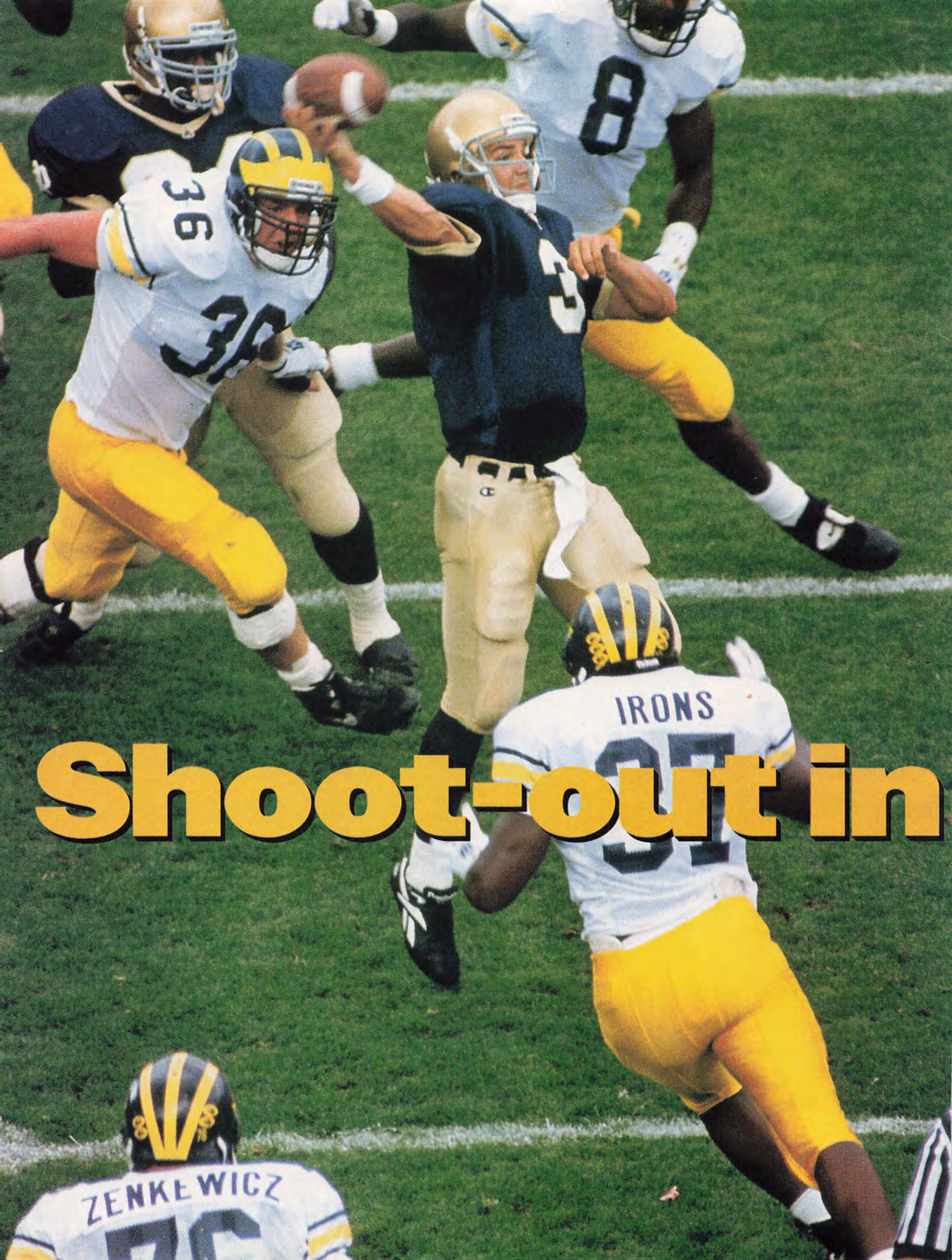
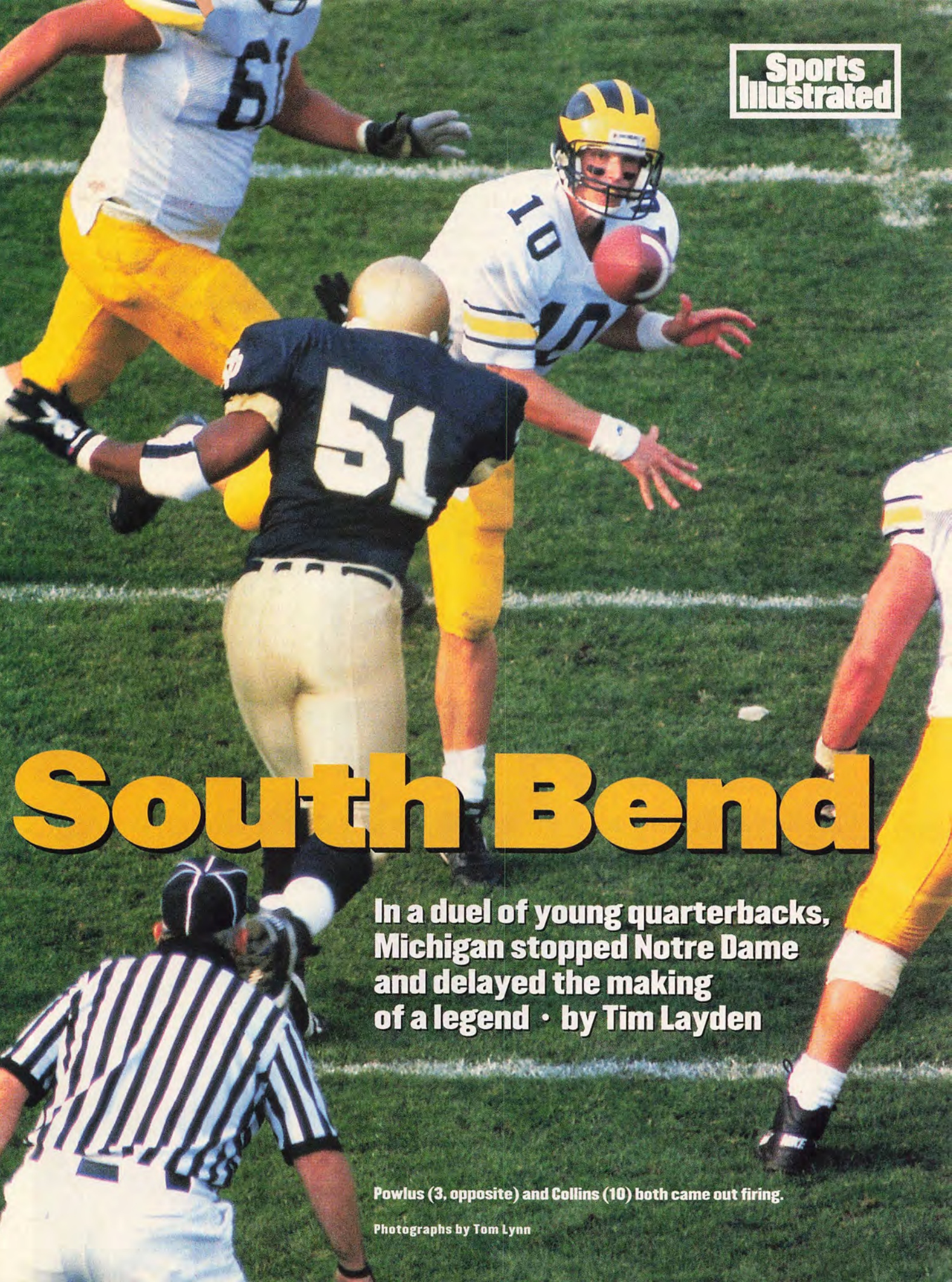


Shoot-out in

Sports Illustrated



South Bend

In a duel of young quarterbacks, Michigan stopped Notre Dame and delayed the making of a legend · by Tim Layden

Powlus (3, opposite) and Collins (10) both came out firing.

Photographs by Tom Lynn

SOMETIMES AN athlete must wait to become a legend, even when there seems to be an irresistible rush toward his coronation and even when that player is the Notre Dame quarterback. Sometimes he must wait because there is this madness that appears in college sports at precisely the moment that things seem most predictable. "Sometimes," said Notre Dame senior linebacker Jeremy Nau, standing in the gathering twilight last Saturday outside Notre Dame Stadium, "roles get reversed, and you don't know how it happened."

DAMIAN STROHMEYER

Mayes caught the apparent game-winner, but Collins (opposite) and Riemersma (16) weren't finished.

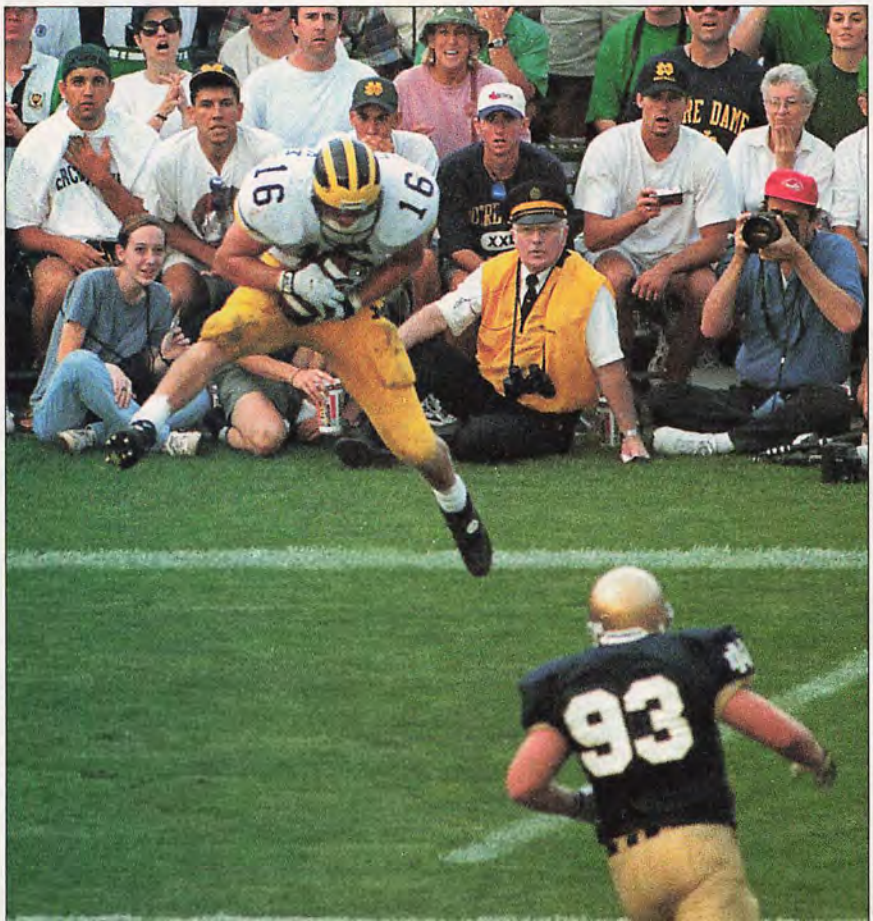
There was to be a story written that day that would challenge plausibility. A sturdy, 20-year-old Pennsylvanian named Ron Powlus had become the Fighting Irish's quarterback after more than a year's anticipation. In his debut a week earlier he had thrown four touchdown passes in a prime-time slaughter of Northwestern, inspiring talk of multiple Heisman trophies and earning him more airtime in the ensuing days than Richard Ravitch and Donald Fehr combined.

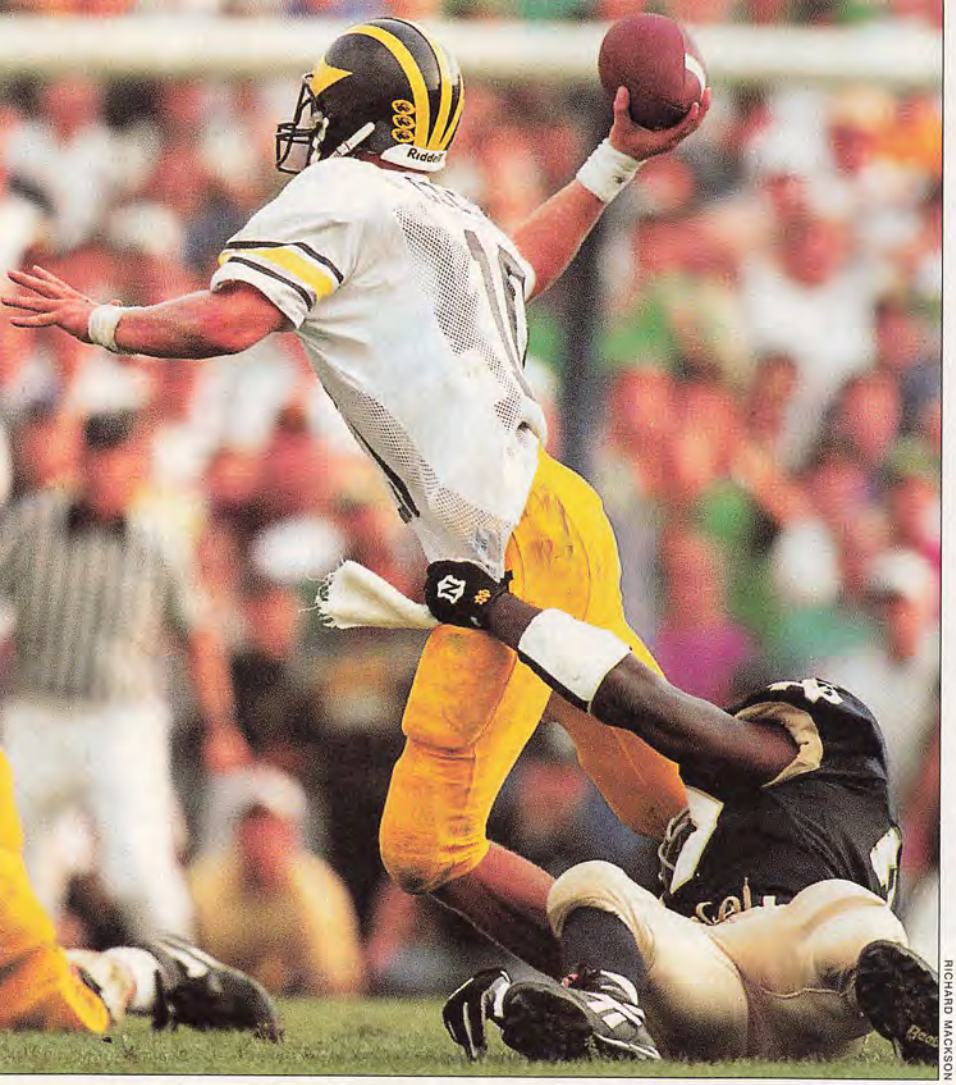
And then with 52 seconds left in Notre Dame's home opener against Michigan on Saturday—a clash imbued, as always, with season-long ramifications—Powlus seemed to have rescued the afternoon for the Fighting Irish with a seven-yard touchdown pass to wideout Derrick Mayes at the back of the end zone. Powlus threw a dart, a high, tight spiral placed in the only available spot—just over Michigan free safety Chuck Winters—and it was snatched from the sky by Mayes, prompting a dizzying celebration. The extra point made it 24–23 for Notre Dame.

From the Michigan sideline, fifth-year senior quarterback Todd Collins watched impassively. He had chosen Michigan over Notre Dame as a high school senior in Walpole, Mass., knowing that as a Wolverine quarterback he would never be so praised as Powlus already has been. "That was part of the reason I didn't go there," Collins says. "I can easily live without all that." Now he heard those hosannas to Powlus, with less than a minute to play. "You were all ready to put him on the cover of SPORTS ILLUSTRATED and make him the Golden Boy, like Rick Mirer," Collins said later, referring to a 1990 SI cover that Michigan folk have never forgotten.

Also looking on from the Michigan bench was junior kicker Remy Hamilton. He is the anti-Powlus, a kid who was suspended from his team last January after being charged with shoplifting beer from an Ann Arbor convenience store. (Hamilton pleaded no contest and was absolved of any guilt.) He was reinstated in time for spring practice, but his technique was so poor that it seemed certain he would not win the first-string placekicking job. "He knew that he'd messed up, and his confidence was gone," said Michigan kicking coach Mike DeBord. "His technique was so bad he was missing PATs."

While Powlus spent his summer in preparation for a three-ring entrance onto the national stage, Hamilton was home in Boca Raton, Fla., kicking 50 to 75 balls a day at Patch Reef Park and Spanish River High. His parents, Harry and Dianne, would shag balls for the younger of their two sons. "We tried to help him get back in real good shape," says Harry. "It's a hard thing, to go out there and kick by yourself. You wouldn't expect a quar-





RICHARD MACKSON

terback to throw alone." Some mornings—"mornings when I didn't feel like getting up, when I felt like going to the beach," says Remy—it was the parents who would wake the son and take him to his workout. He is, in a very real sense, this year's model of David Gordon, who kicked the winning field goal in Boston College's epic 41–39 upset of Notre Dame last Nov. 20. He is what wrenches the story line from its appointed course.

Used primarily for kickoffs last season and in the Wolverines' season-opening win over Boston College, Hamilton was told only Saturday morning that he would handle all the kicking duties against Notre Dame. Standing on the side of the field in the closing seconds of the game, he was stretching to keep loose, because the kickers' practice net already had been folded and put away. Collins took Michigan 59 yards in four plays: a 15-yard scramble, a 26-yard completion to tight end Jay Riemersma, a nine-yard pass to freshman wideout Seth Smith and, with 14 seconds and no timeouts remaining, a remarkable, nine-yard completion to Smith. Collins released the ball as he was thrown to the ground by Notre Dame linebacker Bert Berry, and then Smith dived out of bounds at the Notre Dame 24. Seven seconds remained.

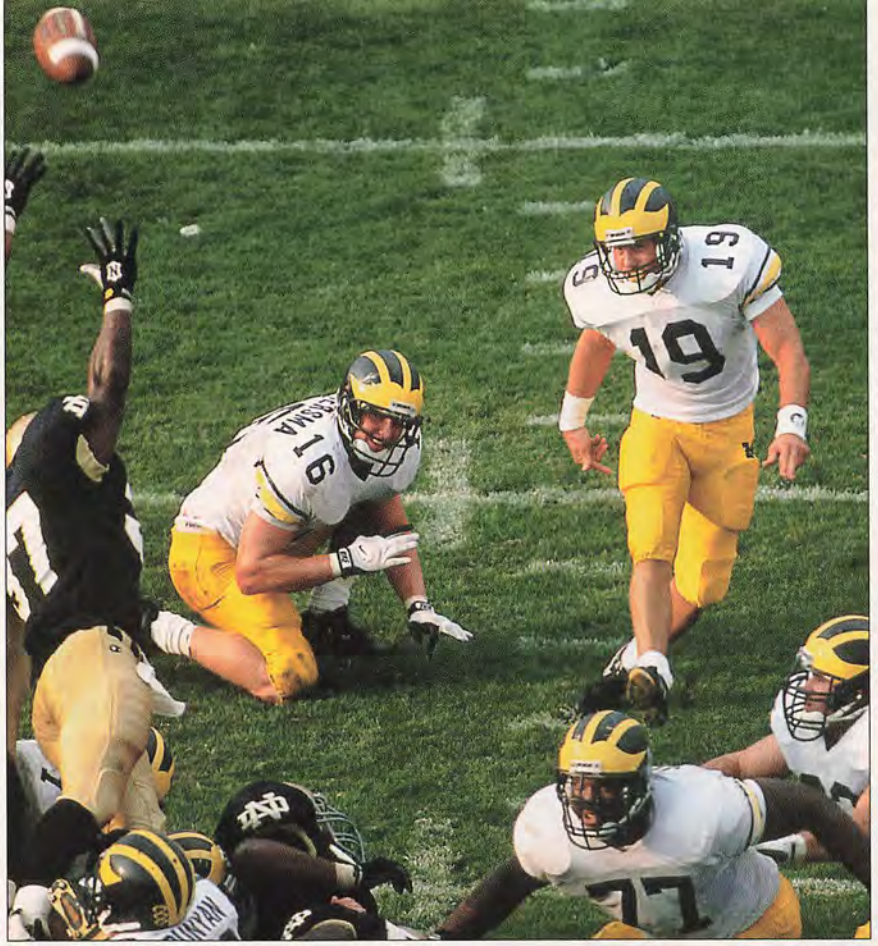
When Hamilton lined up his 42-yard field goal attempt, he had already been successful in three of four tries against the Irish, but he had never in his life won a game with a kick. Before he could get the kick off, Notre Dame took a timeout because it had 12 men on the field. Hamilton jogged to the sideline, where injured Michigan co-captain Walter Smith, an inspirational leader who limps to the center of the field for coin tosses even though he is out for the season, talked in the ear hole of Hamilton's helmet. "Be a dog," Smith told him. Translation: "It means, 'Play hard, have a strong mental attitude,' " Smith says. "You could say that's our motto." Another voice whispered to Hamilton, saying, "Good luck," a voice belonging to Mike Gillette. Notre Damers like to say that their stadium is inhabited by ghosts (at Friday night's pep rally, former quarterback Terry Hanratty went so far as to summon the ghosts of John Huarte and Joe Theismann, both of whom are very much alive), and Gillette is surely one who has been haunted.

On Sept. 10, 1988, exactly six years earlier, Gillette, then a senior kicker at Michigan, missed a 48-yard field goal as time expired, preserving Notre Dame's 19–17 victory and making a national hero of Irish walk-on kicker Reggie Ho, who had booted four field goals, including the 26-yard game-winner with 1:18 to play. Notre Dame went on to win the national championship. Gillette wore number 19, which Hamilton wears now. Gillette was a high school quarterback, as was Hamilton. One difference: Hamilton struck his 42-yard attempt sweetly and nailed the field goal that gave the Wolverines a 26–24 victory and a 2–0 record. "When I looked up," Hamilton said, "all I could see was the ball going into the middle of the net."

We will be lost these next two autumns—will we not?—as Notre Dame and Michigan interrupt this series, which for 10 consecutive years has been the matchup that truly began the college football season, Kickoff and Pigskin Classics notwithstanding. It was the series that made stars of Rocket Ismail and Desmond Howard and Mirer, that gave us Notre Dame coach Lou Holtz defending his decision to settle for a tie in 1992, that produced last year's 27–23 Notre Dame upset, an Irish triumph that foretold their quality. The last seven games have been decided by a total of 27 points.

Next year Notre Dame opens with Northwestern, Purdue and Vanderbilt, a gimme 3–0. Michigan's nonleague schedule consists of Boston College, Memphis and Miami of Ohio. "A terrible schedule," says Michigan coach Gary Moeller. It is, however—and this stinks—more suited to winning a national championship. But none of these games will teach us what Notre Dame–Michigan has taught us over the years.

On Saturday we learned of a Michigan running back named Tshimanga Biakabutuka, and he would prefer that you not call him Tim. Filling in for Wolverine star Tyrone Wheatley, who's expected to return from his shoulder injury on Sept. 24 against Colorado, Biakabutuka rushed for 100 very difficult yards. You will hear much more of him, this sophomore from Zaire by way of Montreal, a fascinating youth who speaks four languages, strikes terror in tacklers with his quick feet and evinces a terrific understanding of good-old-American, quick-fix hero worship. "People like me because they think my



After winning a shot at the placekicking job, Hamilton became a hero with two seconds left.

name is funny," he says. Correct. Mispronunciation was the hook to every feature done on Biakabutuka during game week.

We also learned that Michigan, which had lost four of its last seven to Notre Dame going into last week's game, now has a chance to reach October still alive in the race for the national championship. We learned that Notre Dame, even with Powlus, might be in a transition year between runs at finishing No. 1, with suspect front sevens on both sides of the ball.

And we learned most of all about Powlus, who bears an extraordinary burden. Notre Dame quarterbacks have always performed under the brightest of lights, but Powlus enters his term during a sports media explosion, with talk radio, teleconferences and live remotes, and with every one of the Irish's 11 games on network television. "Everybody told me that when you're the quarterback at Notre Dame, things are crazy," Powlus said three days before the Michigan game. "They were right." Yet Powlus remains much the same fresh-scrubbed kid who was loved by all of Berwick, Pa. Each night he returns to his dorm suite in Flanner Tower, which he shares with three other students, and he dutifully answers all of the letters that arrive in a small stack each day at the football office.

If the wait for his debut left Notre Dame fans frothing (Powlus twice broke his right collarbone last year as a true freshman and didn't play a down), his performance against Northwestern caused unbridled frenzy. "How many Heismans can this kid win?" gushed Brent Musburger on ABC. "Two," said Beano Cook on ESPN. On a dull, ordinary Wednesday in South Bend, he could not walk from the athletic offices at Joyce Center to Notre Dame Stadium, a distance of perhaps 100 yards, without signing four autographs. His number 3 jersey can be purchased in both adult and children's sizes at the Notre Dame bookstore and was seen in great numbers on fans during the Michigan game.

He completed 15 of 27 passes for 187 yards and two touchdowns in the loss to Michigan and held up under heavy heat that included six sacks. He was especially poised in the pocket, possessed of that rare ability to sense pressure before it reaches him. No surprise to his teammates. "I expected this from him *last* year," says Mayes. Powlus's lowest moment came with 4:35 to play, when he fumbled an exchange from center Mark Zataveski on Notre Dame's 37, a turnover that led to Hamilton's third field goal and a 23–17 Michigan lead with 2:15 to play. Barely a minute later, Mayes lay in the end zone, holding what seemed certain to be the winning score.

But lost in the crush to crown Powlus was the smoothly efficient performance of Collins, a lean, 6′ 5″ pocket passer stamped from the same mold that produced Elvis Grbac before him. Against the Irish, Collins completed 21 of 29 passes for 224 yards, better numbers than Powlus's and produced with considerably less noise. Collins is most at home bass fishing on a lake in his native New England or slalom water skiing with 15 feet slashed off the rope ("Don't tell the coaches," he whispers, of the latter avocation), not in the center of swirling hype.

To set up Hamilton's field goal, he coolly scrambled for a first down, hit Riemersma on a middle streak that he had overthrown earlier, then found Smith twice, the second time throwing nearly from the ground. As the winning field goal went through the uprights, Collins shot both arms into the air. "Our turn this year," he said. And if Hamilton was Gordon, the Boston College kicker, then surely Collins was Glenn Foley, the Eagles' star quarterback of a year ago who is now a backup for the New York Jets and whose presence at BC helped discourage Collins from going there. All of this was a chillingly familiar scenario. "Déjà vu," said Nau. "Exactly like Boston College."

In the Notre Dame dressing room, Holtz addressed his players and then slowly worked the room. He stopped at Powlus's cubicle and patted his quarterback's head, which teammates took as a sign of both compassion and support.

Outside, near the deep tunnel that leads from the Notre Dame campus to the floor of the stadium, Hamilton, for the first time that he could remember, signed autographs. His father once owned the Bolero Motel and Bar, hard by the Atlantic Ocean in Wildwood, N.J. Remy was born on Aug. 30, 1974, just before Harry and Dianne closed up the place for the summer. They named him Remy Martin Hamilton, after a fine cognac they used to serve. Saturday was his and theirs to toast.

For Ron Powlus, there will be many other moments on many other days, a legend built slowly and sure to prosper. How did the roles get reversed, you ask? Just a small slice of madness. ■

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"Flipper up there isn't the only one who loves this Sidekick," laughs Beth Bloom, Lyle's wife. "I'm a lawyer, and the Sidekick's incredible mileage makes it perfect for scooting around town. I just put the soft top back on, fold down the rear seat, throw in my huge piles of not-so brief legal briefs, and head for court. So whether you're communing with nature, or just commuting, the Sidekick's perfect for any personality. Even that guppy up there."

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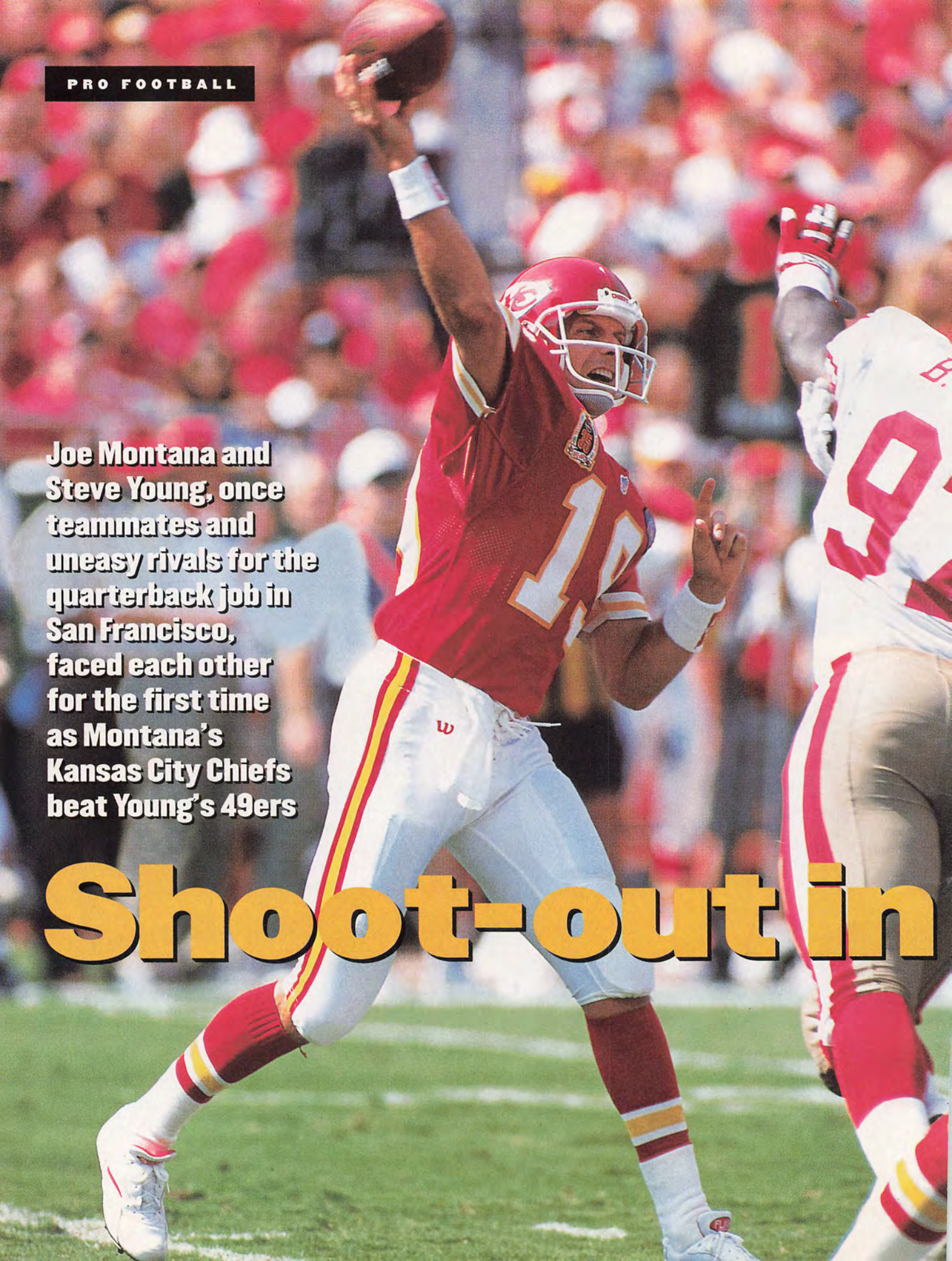
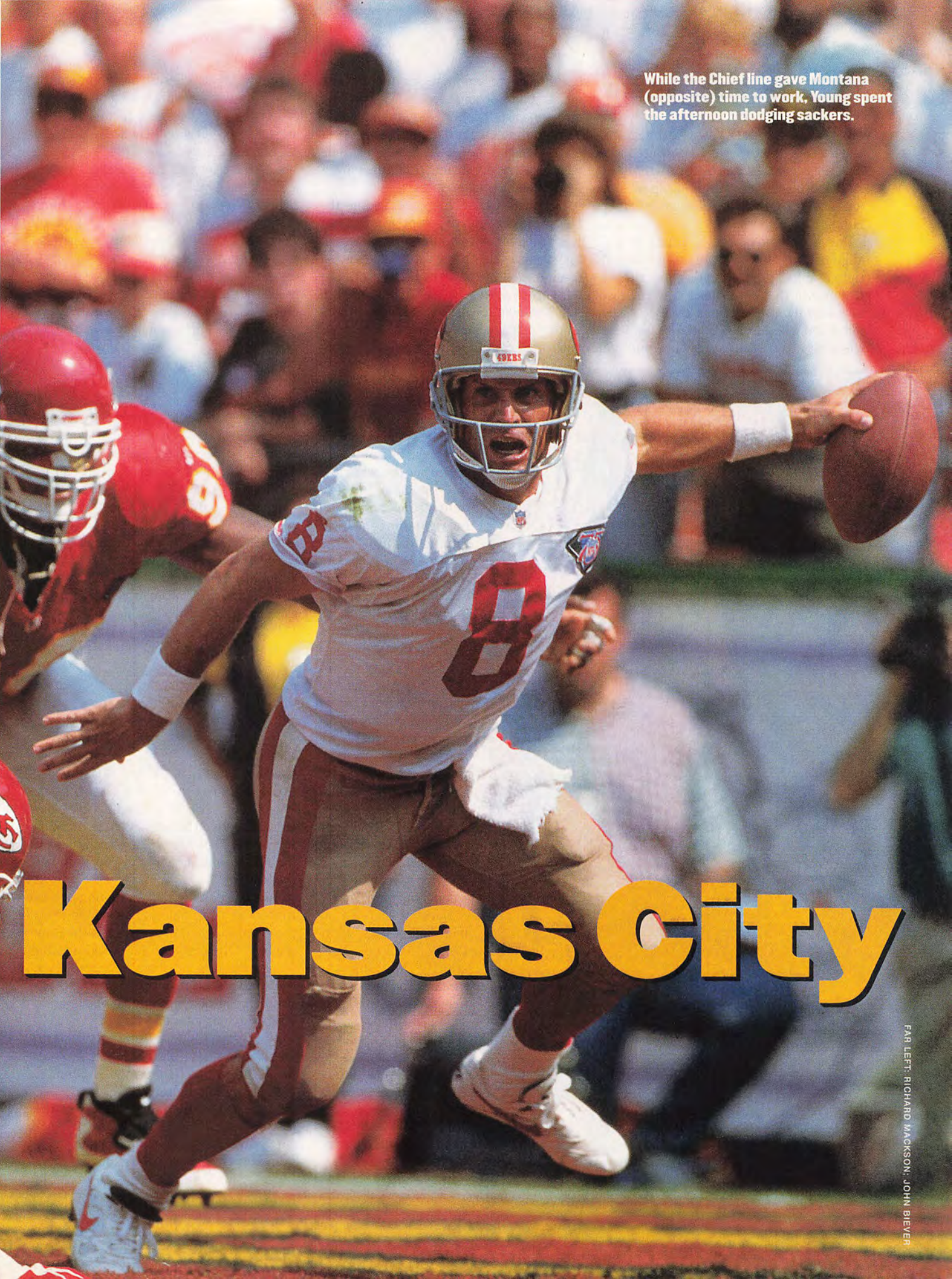


Joe Montana and Steve Young, once teammates and uneasy rivals for the quarterback job in San Francisco, faced each other for the first time as Montana's Kansas City Chiefs beat Young's 49ers

Shoot-out in



While the Chief line gave Montana (opposite) time to work, Young spent the afternoon dodging sackers.

Kansas City

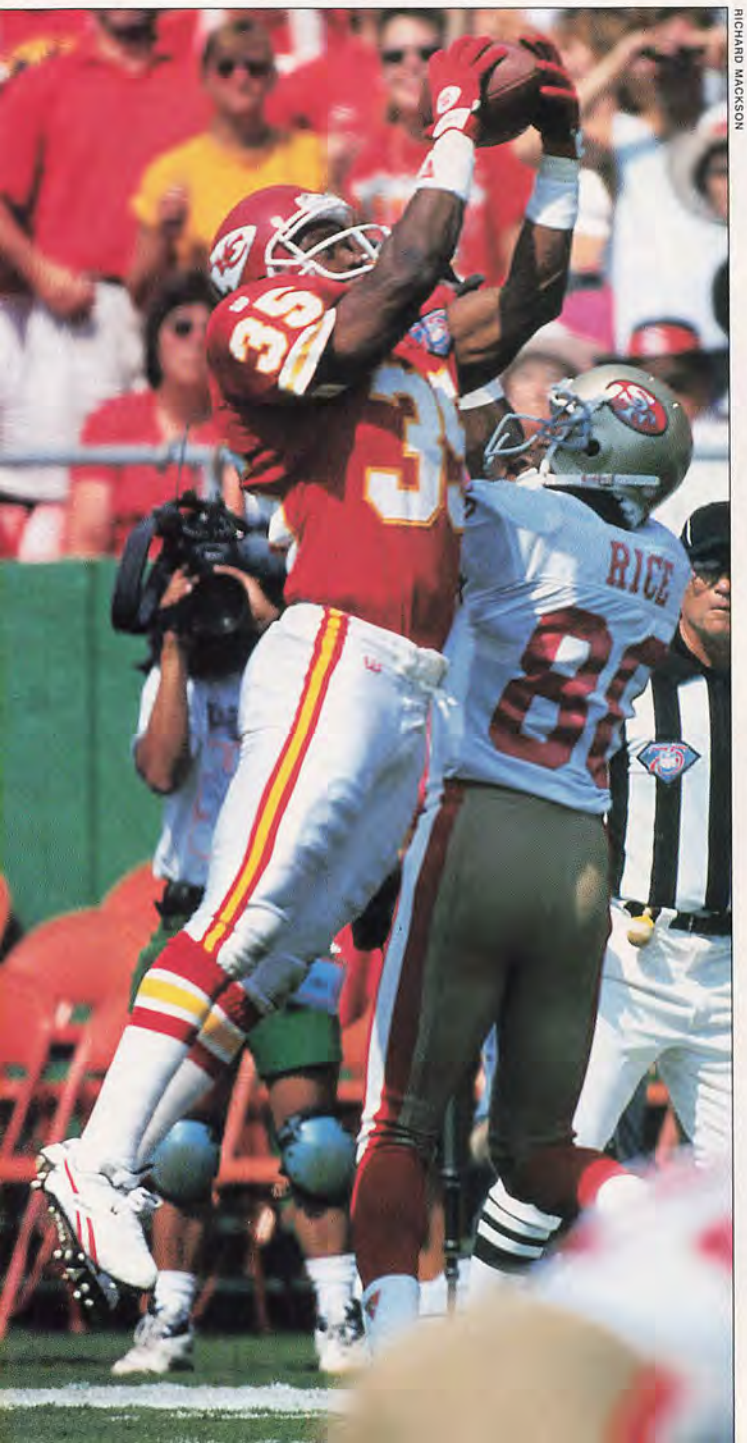
FAR LEFT: RICHARD MACKSON; JOHN BIEVER

by Paul Zimmerman

IT TRANSCENDED won-lost records and the fact that this was a meeting of two unbeaten teams. It was historic, emotional. It was big. "Our championship in September," Kansas City Chief owner Lamar Hunt called it.

Joe Montana vs. Steve Young in the Vindication Bowl. Montana's magical right arm had deposited four Super Bowl trophies in the San Francisco 49ers' display case. He was a god in the Bay Area, but a god who left in a cold fury last year when he was first told that he would not be allowed to compete for the starting quarterback job and then, in a last-minute effort to save face for everyone involved, was guaranteed the position. Take your guarantee and shove it, he said, and off he went to Kansas City in a trade the Niners felt obliged to make.

He was replaced by Steve Young, the NFL's highest-rated passer for the last two years, but with no Super Bowl win to his credit. And that's what cut deepest around the Bay. You've gotten rid of our Joe and given us *what*? A terrific athlete, a fine passer, but where are the championships? A harsh measurement to be sure, and unfair of course, but there it is. Joe vs. Steve, on Sunday in Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City, Game 2 of the season, with both guys fresh and healthy. Now we'll find out.



RICHARD MACKSON

White went over the top to pick off a pass intended for Rice, Young's top receiver.

During the week before the game, the two quarterbacks said all the right things in an attempt to defuse the frenzy. It's a long season, Young said, and we'll have 14 games after this one, and we can't lose focus. Montana did his talking in a Monday conference call that was widely quoted during the week. Here and there you could detect an edge to his remarks. "All I wanted was fair competition for the job," he said. "I didn't want to be given the job. That's where people were misled: 'Oh, here he is complaining. Give it to him. Keep him quiet.' "

For four years Young had labored as Montana's backup, constantly bugging the coaches for more work in practice, for more snaps. He then ran the show for two seasons while Montana was out with an elbow injury, and what developed between them was . . . well, hatred might be too strong a word, but on Montana's side, dislike, and for Young, a feeling that he would never get a real chance as long as Montana was there.

"He's a gym rat, that's Steve's problem," says Chief player-personnel boss Lynn Stiles, who was on the 49er coaching staff for five years. "Hungry to compete, wants to beat you in anything. Problem is, the other guy's exactly the same."

And now they were meeting on the field for the first and, unless the teams play each other in a Super Bowl, probably the last time. This was it, a chance for Bay Area fans to say, "See, we told you."

For the Chiefs' p.r. staff it was a nightmare. "The biggest media blitz in the six years I've been here," said Kansas City publicity director Bob Moore. "Two hundred requests for cameras and video credentials—normally we get 30 or 40—so many media applications that we had to go to folding chairs."

Scalpers on the Kansas side of the state line, where there are no limits on the resale of tickets, were advertising seats for $350 apiece, club level with a parking pass. *The Kansas City Star* ran an ad: "Two tickets . . . will meet with the highest bidder . . . outside city limits."

Desperate 49er fans were calling anybody, even Chiefs. "One guy phoned me for tickets," K.C. noseguard Dan Saleamua said, "and said, 'You know me, we had drinks once.' I told him, 'Yeah, and I paid for them. Get your own tickets.' "

Joe Montana vs. Steve Young, Joe Montana vs. the 49ers. His new teammates let him hear about that one. "I asked him, 'Are you going to play every one of those guys by yourself, Joe?' " defensive end Neil Smith said last Friday afternoon. " 'The way they played against the Raiders Monday night, you can have them all.' "

That game, a 44–14 annihilation by San Francisco, took place the evening after the Chiefs opened their season by beating the New Orleans Saints 30–17, with Montana putting on one of his highlight shows. "The old Joe? Oh, my god, yes," 49er assistant head coach Bill McPherson said after watching film of Montana's performance. "A machine, putting the ball right on the money, one after another. See, he's healthy now, and that's the difference. He's got his legs under him."

Last year Montana was sharp for the Chiefs—when he was on the field. A sprained wrist, then a recurring hamstring injury and finally a concussion kept him out of action for all or part of 10 games. "I

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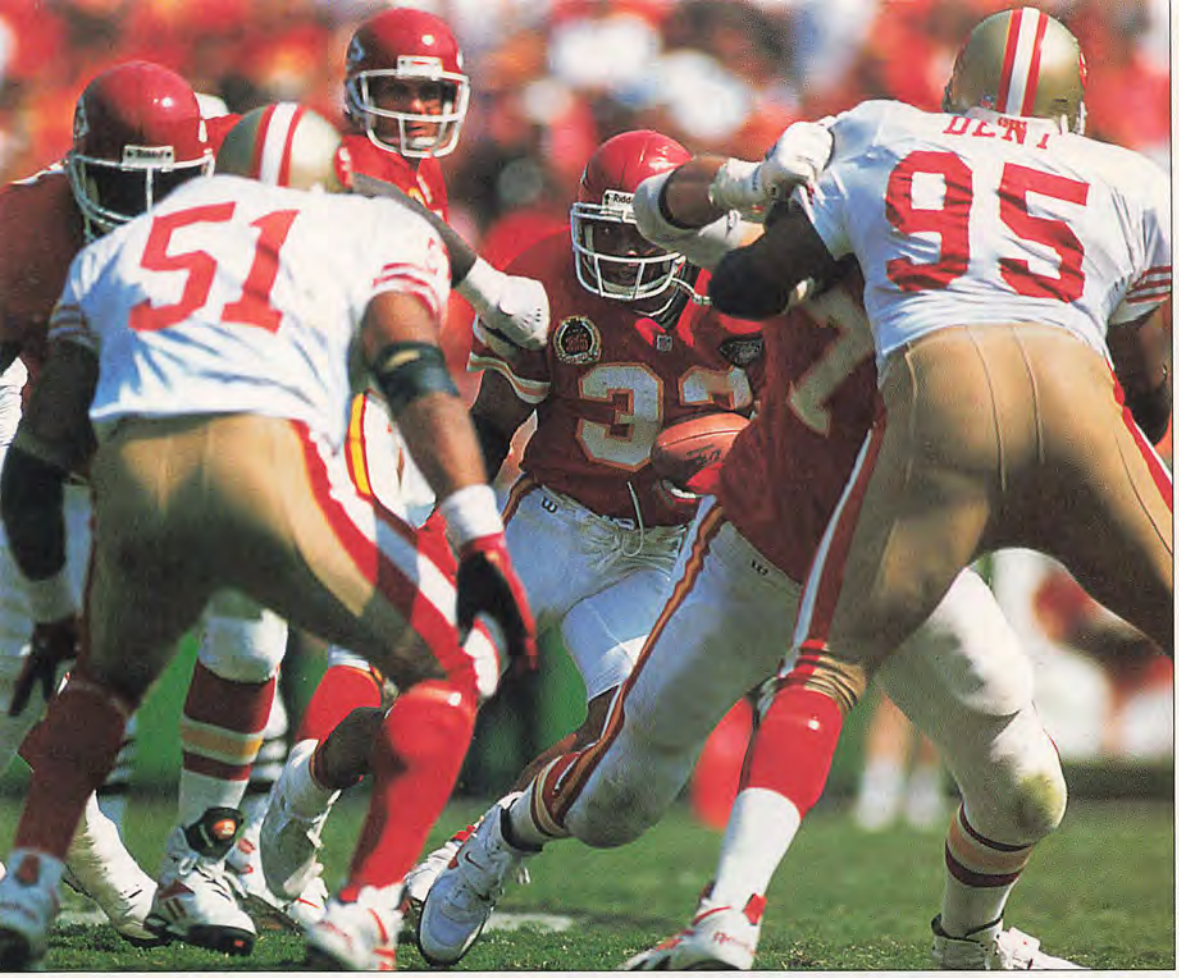

JOHN BIEVER

Nearly as valuable as Montana, Allen, K.C.'s other old-timer, had 114 total yards and a touchdown.

never felt right the whole year," he said at Friday's practice. "It was almost like I felt cheated. So I tried to do more work in the off-season, squeezing for the wrist, more lifting and sprinting for the hamstring. Now I'm strong, the strongest I've ever felt."

At 38. Another old-timer in the Chiefs' locker room, Marcus Allen, 34, a Los Angeles Raider reject, had his own take on the Montana vs. Young-and-the-49ers angle. "It's deep, deeper than Joe will admit," Allen said during the week. "I went through it last year here. Vindication, poetic justice. I already got mine. His is coming. He feels it even though he won't talk about it publicly."

San Francisco veterans of the Montana Super Bowl years mentioned the odd feeling they would have seeing Joe across the field. "Maybe I'll get him to toss me a pass in the warmups," Jerry Rice said. "We're not supposed to be watching the other team's offense when we're on the bench," said left tackle Steve Wallace, "but I know I'll be sneaking peeks. I hope they have one of those big screens."

"It will be a weird experience," said All-Pro right tackle Harris Barton, one of the Niners' two casualties from the Raider game. Barton suffered a partially torn left triceps, and the guard next to him, Ralph Tamm, would miss the game against the Chiefs with a sprained left arch. Their absence from the offensive line would play a key role in the outcome. "Honestly, I don't know how I'll feel tomorrow," Barton said on Saturday. "I mean, it's Joe, man. When I was in the hospital getting my arm operated on, he was the first guy who called me. He and [Montana's wife] Jennifer sent flowers to my dad when he was in the hospital. He's meant so much, all the money we're making now, all the people in the 49er organization who wouldn't even have jobs if not for Joe."

You don't want to play Kansas City when you're shorthanded on the offensive line, not against its pass rushers. Smith was the NFL's sack leader in 1993. Derrick Thomas, a 247-pound speed-rushing linebacker who lined up in a down position against San Francisco, began the season tied for second among NFL sackers during his five-year career, with 66, only 10½ of them on natural grass. This year the Chiefs have replaced the artificial turf at Arrowhead with the real thing, but against the 49ers on Sunday, Thomas had three sacks. On the second, he beat Barton's replacement, Harry Boatswain, and tackled Young for a safety, and on the third, he blew by Boatswain without being touched, forcing a grounding penalty. "And so ends the myth of the grass," Thomas said afterward.

Kansas City lined Thomas up at left end, to the lefthanded Young's blind side, to take advantage of Boatswain. Smith was on the right flank. His mission was to get his hands up, block Young's vision on the short-drop time routes and make him scramble.

The strategy worked. Young was harried and belabored all afternoon. By halftime Niner left guard Jesse Sapolu was lost with a pulled right hamstring. In the third quarter right guard Derrick Deese went to the bench for three downs with a mild concussion, and his place was taken by Brian Bollinger, who had been cut by the Arizona Cardinals. Young's offense was crumbling, but he hung in, scrambling, taking some ferocious hits, including one by Smith that drew a 15-yard penalty and nearly put Young down for keeps.

"I apologized to him after the game," Smith said. "I asked him if he was O.K. I wanted him to know it was an accident. It wasn't easy for him out there. I know one time he should have stayed down but didn't."

The Chiefs took command for good on the Niners' second possession of the second half, the same series in which Deese was sidelined. The 49ers, down 17–14, had a third-and-two on their own 35. Young, under a furious rush, with K.C. end Vaughn Booker hanging on to his leg, threw a quick post to tight end Brent Jones. The ball bounced off Jones's hands, and safety Charles Mincy intercepted it and returned it 31 yards to the San Francisco 17. Four plays later Allen went in, standing up, from four yards out, and the Chiefs had a 24–14 lead.

In the fourth quarter the Niners put to-

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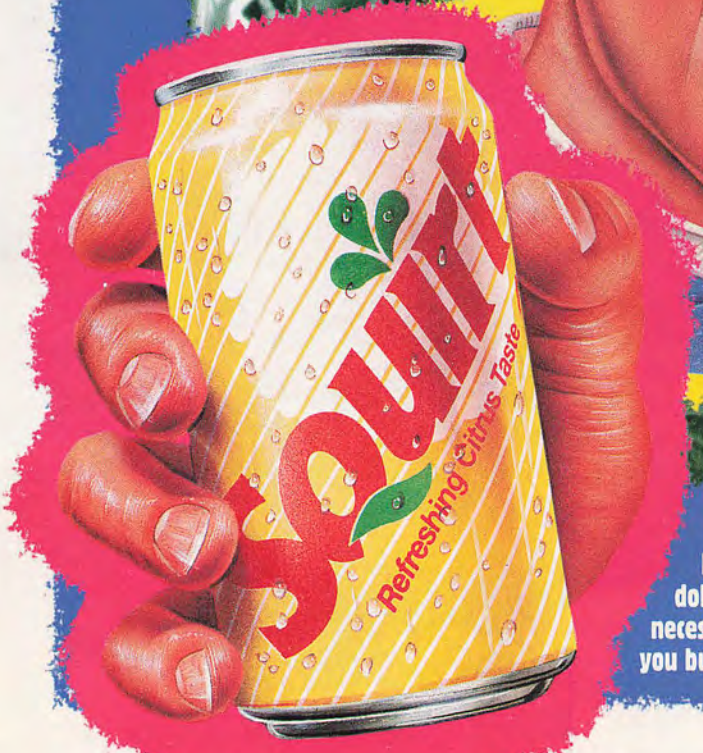

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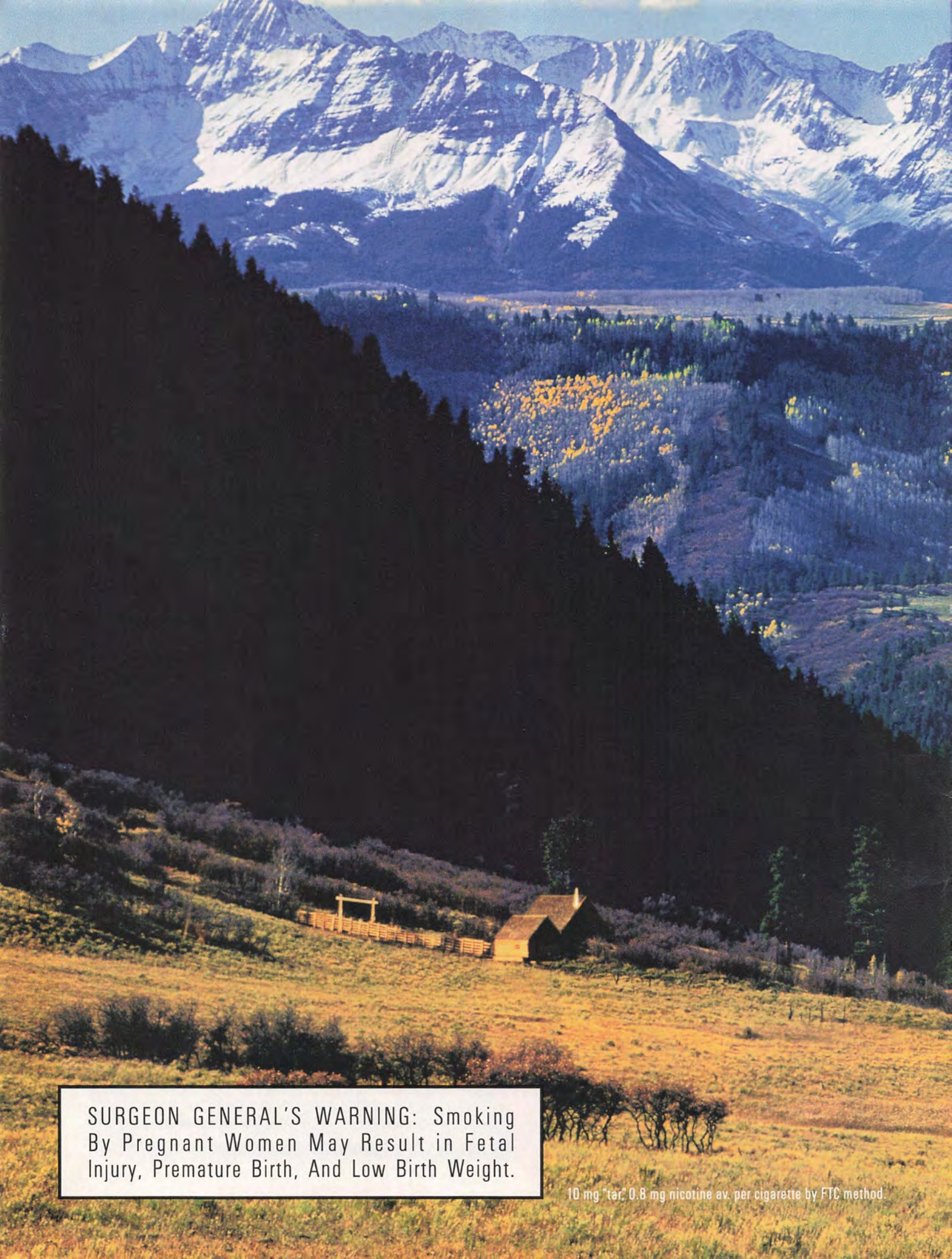
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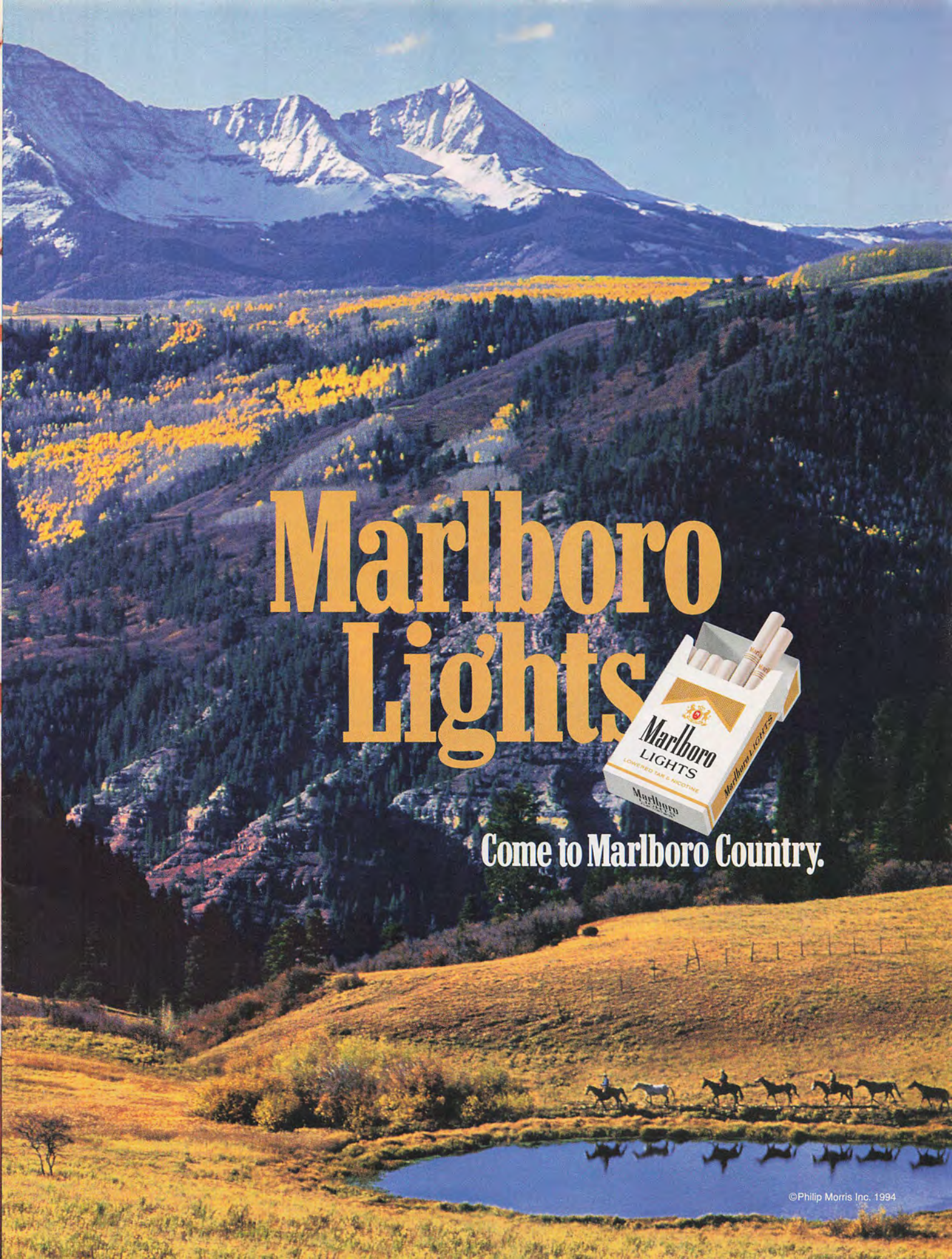
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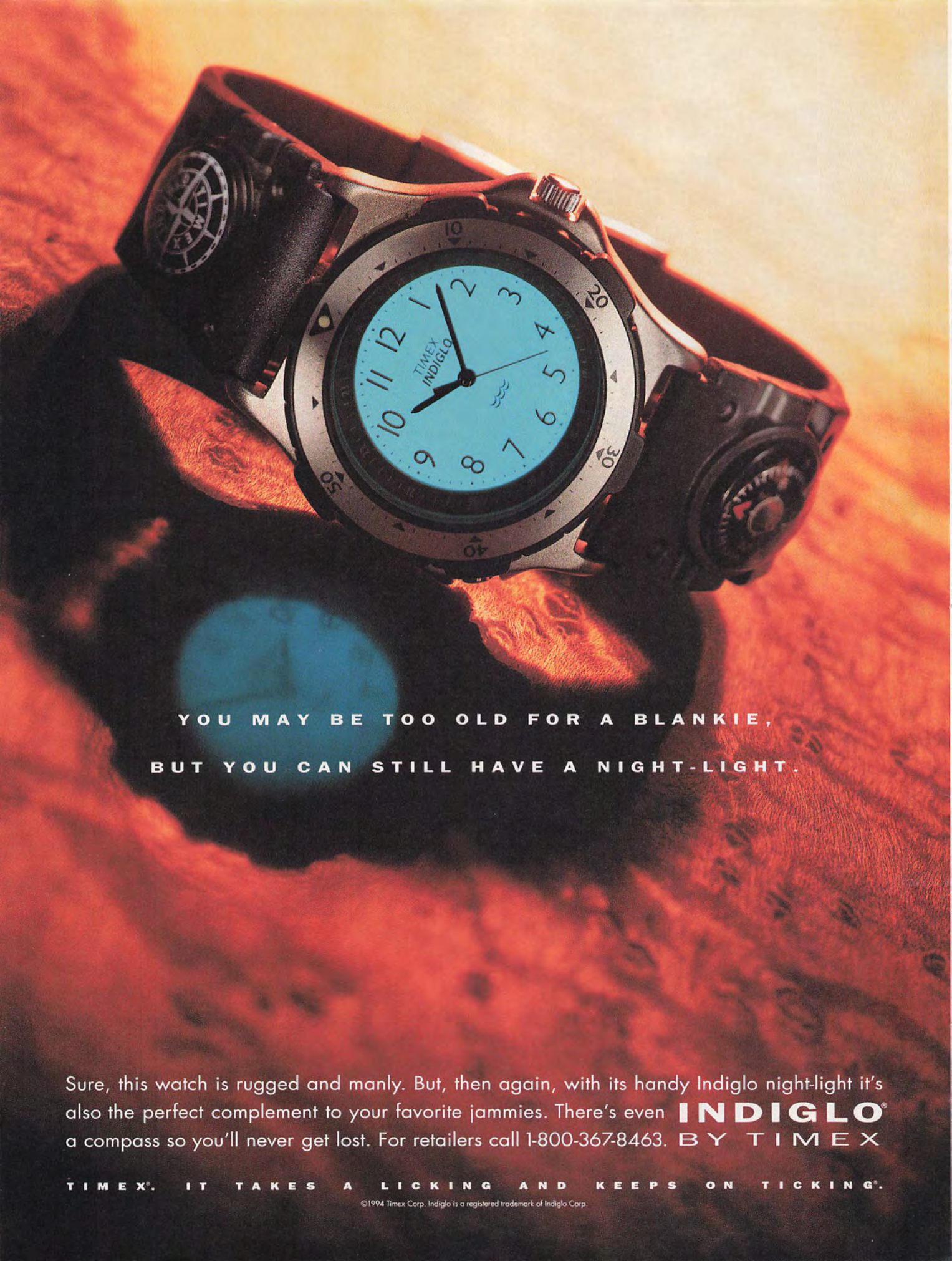
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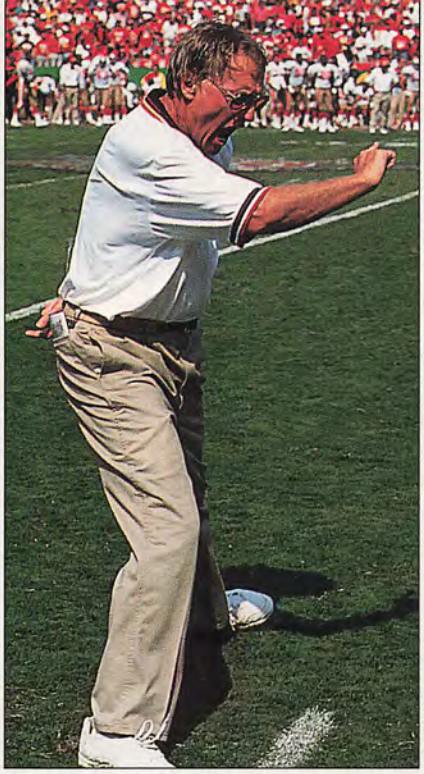


PETER READ MILLER

gether a long drive that ended in a 19-yard field goal when Young, rolling left and trying to score from two yards out, was cut down by strong safety David Whitmore, who came to the Chiefs in the Montana deal. San Francisco had one more shot, but that died when wideout John Taylor was stripped of the ball after catching a short pass, and Kansas City recovered near midfield. Final score: 24–17 Chiefs.

Montana vs. Young? Well, Montana got the win. He also got protection, plenty of it. He was sacked once, Young four times. Montana's game was precise and practically error-free, as he worked the ball to his backs and underneath receivers. He went deep only once with success, on the first play of a fourth-quarter, clock-killing drive, an up pattern to Allen for 38 yards. It was a shocker that caught the Niners by surprise. "He was the fourth guy on the read," Montana said, which gives you some idea of the kind of time he was getting. "I saw him with a step on his man and took a shot at it."

After the game Montana looked fresh and relaxed. He was enjoying himself, enjoying the moment. As usual, he was the last player out of the locker room. Earlier he had made the rounds with a bag of hamburgers, handing one to Smith and anyone else who was still around. "Guys like Neil, these were the guys putting the pressure on," he said. "I wasn't watching

Plays like Thomas's nailing of Young for a safety set chief Chief Marty Schottenheimer to cheering.

Steve all that much out there, but I knew he was under a lot of pressure, and what it meant to me was, Hey, those are the guys who are getting us the ball back.

"Steve came over and said hello during the warmups, just normal chitchat. After the game he came over and wished me luck, and I did the same. I said hello to Jerry Rice and a few other guys until it became a madhouse out there. How do I feel? I'm glad it's all over."

In the back of the room during Joe's postgame press conference, Jennifer was answering questions. "Nervous? I'm always nervous at game time," she said. "But I was so confident last night, and I told him so."

"Why?" someone asked.

"Because it's him," she said. "It means a lot, emotionally. The thing between him and Steve means a lot because it's what you've all been writing all week."

Just like old times. In the locker room Joe Montana Sr. was mentioning the 35 to 40 friends and relatives who had flown in for the game, the barbecue his son had thrown for the whole bunch on Saturday, and, yes, the day's No. 1 angle. "You can pressure Joe," he said. "He handles it better than the other guy. Steve looks to run, Joe's always looking for the receiver."

On the day, Montana completed 19 of 31 passes for 203 yards with two touchdowns and no interceptions. Young was 24 of 34 for 288 yards and a TD. He threw two interceptions—the first on that dropped pass by Jones and the second on a quick up to Rice, with free safety William White swooping over for the pick.

"It was a battle right up to the end," Young said afterward, looking very tired. There were bruises on both shoulders, a nasty scrape down his back. "Right up to the end I thought we could come back and win it. I learned from Joe, from the master. Today the master had a little more to teach the student.

"A banged-up offensive line going against some of the best pass rushers in football, plus the crowd to contend with—that made it awfully rough for Young," Chief left guard Dave Szott said. "Some of those shots he took, I didn't think he was getting up. You see stuff like that, and it gets you foaming at the mouth to protect your guy."

Which, in the purest sense, is what it's all about. Keep Joe healthy and there's no limit to what you can do, even in a September Super Bowl. ■

RICHARD MACKSON

TENNIS

Anarchy and Agassi

What better place for the redemption of Andre Agassi than a typically chaotic U.S. Open? · by S.L. Price

NOT YET. The security guard stops them all, Andre Agassi in front, Michael Stich behind and breathing down his neck, the horseshoe of beefy bodyguards surrounding them both. The guard, listening to his walkie-talkie crackle above the murmur that is quickening to a roar, waits for permission to bring the U.S. Open final to Louis Armstrong Stadium.

The lobby of the players' lounge fills with the name: "Andre!" . . . "Come on, Agas-si!" . . . "*Pump it up, Andre!*" Agassi doesn't hear. Outside the door, hundreds of faces shift; they see him through the glass. It is 4 p.m. on this September Sunday, a hint of fall in the air. Agassi doesn't feel it. His face is blank, eyes staring deep into nothing. His body is shaking.

He is hopping from foot to foot, yes, but there is more than that. Agassi's shoulders, arms, head—all of him—are quivering. "There's no way this guy's coming here and taking my title," he says to his coach, tour veteran Brad Gilbert. He can't wait to move. Stich tries not to notice. "O.K., let's go," says the guard, and they surge into the waiting crowd, cameras clicking and popping above Agassi's head. The fans fall in and follow Agassi the hundred yards into the stadium.

"He is ridiculously large," Todd Martin had said after Agassi dispatched him in the semifinals the day before, but Martin was talking only of Agassi's fame, of this kind of mob scene and Barbra and Brooke and the hair that makes young girls titter. Martin wasn't speaking of tennis or of the massive talent Agassi came perilously close to wasting or of the fact that on Sunday, Agassi would arrive at a place few believed he was capable of reaching. Yes, Agassi, who was unseeded, defeated five seeded players en route to winning the U.S. Open, picked Stich apart in the final, 6–1, 7–6, 7–5, and then fell to his knees in the tournament's most indelible moment. But Agassi is suddenly the biggest thing in tennis because he proved himself serious at last, and an Agassi with purpose is simply gigantic.

"I feel I should have four or five Grand Slam titles now, no question about that," Agassi said the day before the event at Flushing Meadow began. "It will be disappointing if I can't accomplish the things I'm capable of, but more than that, I'll regret it if I don't give myself the chance. And the way to do that is by working my ass off. I'm disappointed I didn't win this tournament in '88, '89, '90, disappointed I didn't win the French Open in '90, '91, disappointed I haven't made it down to Australia yet—but those are things I'm going to start doing now."

So he did. But besides Agassi, who would have predicted this? Coming into the U.S. Open, top dog Pete Sampras was nursing an injury, Jim Courier was mulling withdrawal, and the 20th-ranked Agassi—absent from the final of a Grand Slam event since he won Wimbledon in 1992—was making news only by complaining about an attempt to juice the game with rock-and-roll during a tune-up tournament in New Haven, Conn. Yet by Sunday evening, tennis had gotten its biggest push since Hurricane Connors blew through Queens in 1991, and it should have come as little surprise. Nothing shakes up country clubbers more than the yearly fortnight in New York.

Why? The players hate Flushing Meadow. Noisy, dirty and rude, it's about as suitable for tennis as Times Square. "It's like a nightmare," says Yevgeny Kafelnikov, the promising young Russian, and he's correct. That's why it's wonderful. Only the U.S. Open has the clout to yank the world's most coddled jocks out of their cocoons, slap them around and make them like it—or else. Sampras? The No. 1 player complained about "humps and bumps" on the Stadium Court, and two days later he got bumped all the way back to Florida. Boris Becker whined that the courts were too slow, and he never made it out of the first round. As for the eighth-seeded Andrei Medvedev, who crusaded last year against "poisoned" food, he never had a chance. After promising to detail more complaints once he finished playing, Medvedev was flung out in the second round. He skulked off without another word.

Such is the black magic of the place. Still, even connoisseurs of trash-town tennis were stunned by the savagery with which the men's draw was torn apart. For the first time since the tournament began seeding players, in 1927, the top three men were bounced before the quarterfinals—and a year that had seemed headed toward a coronation ended in anarchy. Sampras, winner of the Australian Open in January, had seemed on an unstoppable glide after easing to a second straight Wimbledon title in July,

DAVID WALBERG

The new Agassi still hugged the baseline, but he kept his mind off the sidelines.

DAVID WALBERG

Even with her feet off clay, Sánchez Vicario (top) looked at ease dismantling the aching Graf.

with the rest of the field following docilely behind. At the U.S. Open, however, an exhausted Sampras suffered an excruciating defeat that supplied the coup de grâce to what had begun as a Grand Slam campaign. "It's been a lost summer for him," says Sampras's coach, Tim Gullikson.

After losing six weeks in July and August to tendinitis in his left ankle, Sampras came to Flushing Meadow sorely lacking in tennis conditioning. Talent carried him through three rounds, and until Peruvian baseliner Jaime Yzaga chugged into view, it seemed that Sampras might roll to his sixth Grand Slam title. Then something better happened. Sampras lost. More, Sampras lost well.

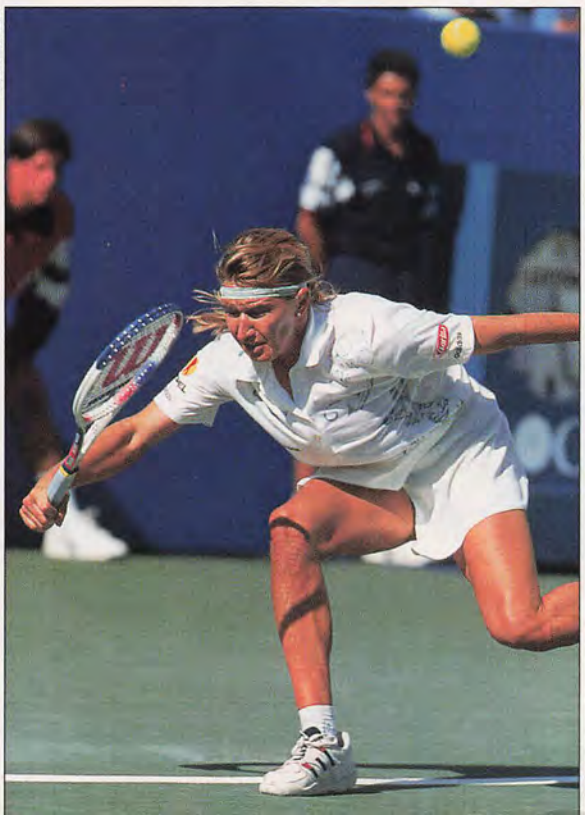
For those who complain that he is passionless, that he lacks personality, Sampras proved it all a lie. His feet cut raw by the hard court, spasms shooting up his back, Sampras found himself tiring against Yzaga. By the fifth set he was doubled over after each point, using his racket the way an old man uses a cane. Later he called it "the worst I have ever felt on a tennis court." Down 5–3, with Yzaga serving for the match, Sampras battled his own body to break serve and then held serve to square the set at 5–5. "I wasn't going to give up," said Sampras after succumbing 7–5.

The match, like most of this Open, was middling tennis but superb drama, and precisely what the sport needed. Years of bloodless excellence from the likes of Courier and Sampras and Stefan Edberg had helped cause declining interest among fans, criticism from the press and defensiveness in the tennis establishment, and that is a fatal combination. Agassi's rise and Sampras's fall—with the rivalry that could ensue—made the men interesting again. Then, at the last minute, the women got the idea too.

For just when it appeared that nothing, not even an ailing back, could keep Steffi Graf from her 16th Grand Slam singles title, here came the inexhaustible Arantxa Sánchez Vicario, bounding out of a huge first-set hole and pumping life into the women's game by outhitting and outtoughing her rival in the finest U.S. Open women's title match in a decade. A finalist at this year's Australian Open and winner of the French Open, the second-ranked Sánchez Vicario collected her second Grand Slam title of '94 and assaulted Graf's once impregnable spot at the top of the women's game. "Winning a Grand Slam final is a great feeling, but it's even better to beat the Number 1 player in the world," said Sánchez Vicario after her 1–6, 7–6, 6–4 victory. "Nobody can take away what I did."

True enough, especially when you consider what has been happening all around her. Graf's travails—she has suddenly lost at three straight Grand Slam events—are symptomatic of a tour struggling to find itself after losing Monica Seles and Jennifer Capriati. Only Sánchez Vicario seems intent on paying the price to be great. Following two consecutive losses to Graf earlier this year, Sánchez Vicario decided to beef up her game and mind. So she hired sports psychologist Jim Loehr, who had worked with Gabriela Sabatini before her 1990 U.S. Open win, and trainer Pat Etcheberry, who works with Sampras. "They know what it takes to be a champion," Sánchez Vicario said. Twice a winner on the clay courts of Roland Garros, Sánchez Vicario knew she had to win a different major to break through.

"To be the best player in the



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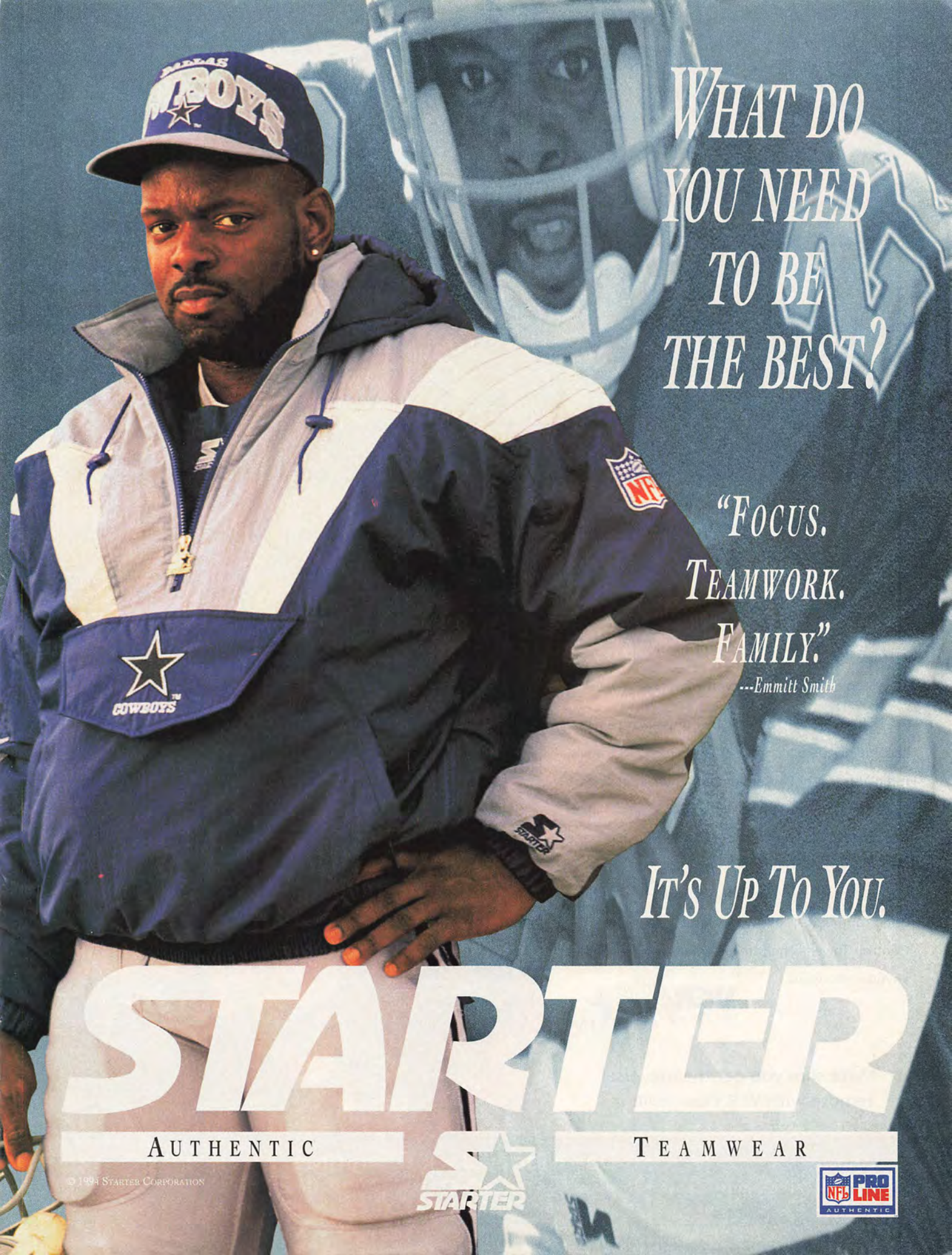
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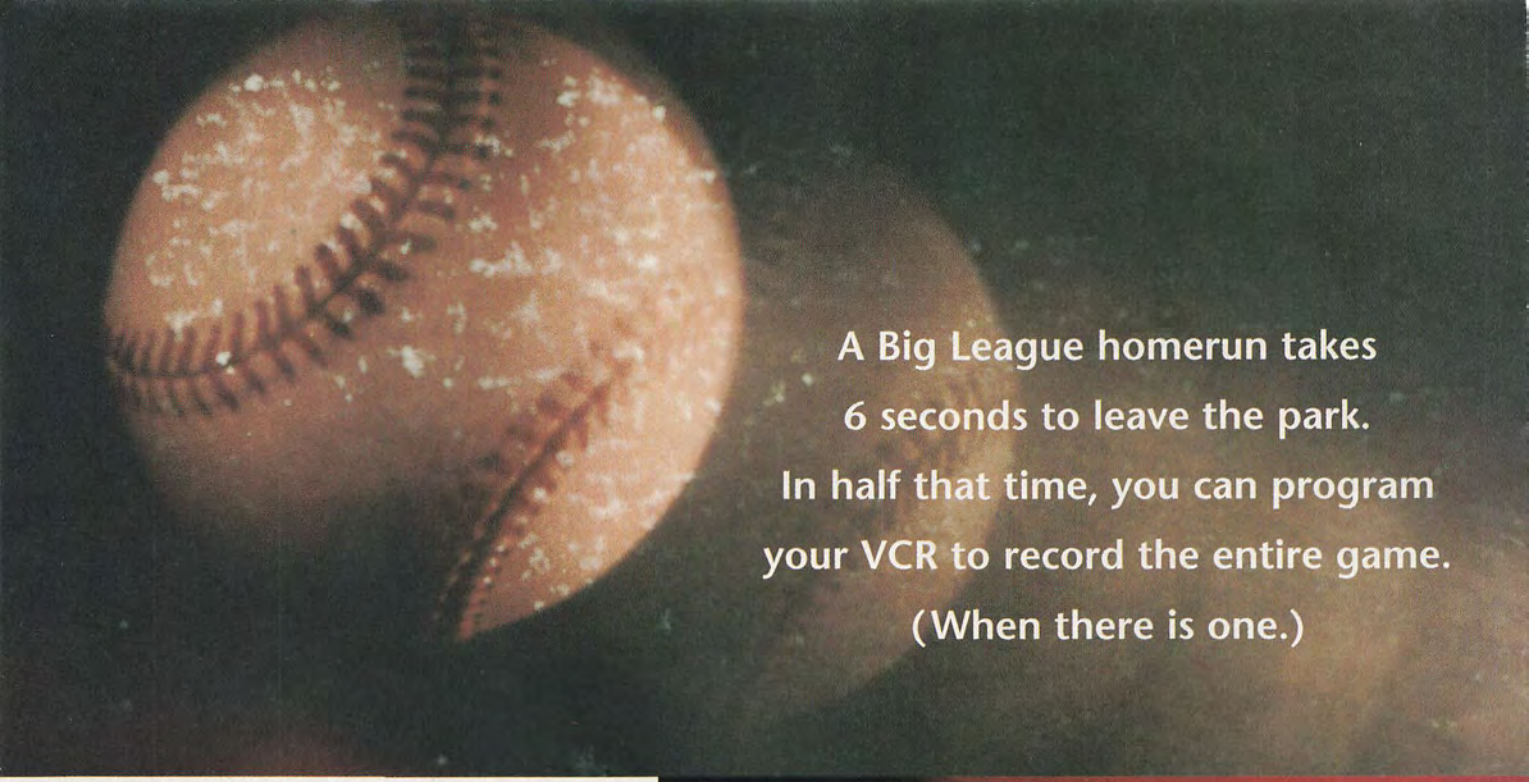
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world, to be Number 1, I knew I had to develop my game," she said. "I never felt, 'I've had enough; I want to stay the way I am because I'm winning anyway.' I always like to take risks to get better."

Obviously. Though Graf's back trouble clearly hindered her midway through the second set of Saturday's women's final, Sánchez Vicario earned the crown. She chipped and charged back into the match, volleying with authority. Happy? "I'm still in the air," she said. But guess where she wants to touch down? "Now that I win on hard courts," Sánchez Vicario says, "I know I can win on grass."

Such is the power of taking New York—if you can make it there . . . well, you know the rest. The first words Gilbert said when Agassi came off the court on Sunday were, "You're going to win the Australian Open." Who's going to argue? It is Gilbert, after all, whom Agassi credits with reviving his career, with giving him the ability to think through points for the first time. "He has spent his whole career winning matches he shouldn't have won," Agassi says of his new coach. "I've done the opposite: I've lost a lot of matches I shouldn't have lost."

That was always the most frustrating thing about Agassi. No one on the tour, not even Sampras, possesses more natural ability. Agassi's ground strokes are so quick and compact that he handles even the most difficult returns like a bandleader flicking his baton. That he was accused of tanking a Davis Cup match or buckled under pressure in two French Open finals or skipped Wimbledon was not the point; Agassi was wasting his talent. By last February even he knew it. He told Perry Rogers, his manager and childhood friend, "Time's going by, and I'm not even on the path of figuring out what I need to do."

The first step was to change coaches. Agassi had worked with Nick Bollettieri, Pancho Segura and Fritz Nau, but he had always been bothered by the fact that none of them had faced Sampras's serve or Courier's tenacity. Gilbert, though, had beaten Agassi in four of their eight meetings. Agassi asked him to dinner in Miami on the eve of the Lipton Championships in March, and Gilbert detailed Agassi's weaknesses: throwing away points, belting the ball without thought, playing a one-dimensional baseline game. Agassi knew after one conversation that he had found his man. Gilbert taught him that talent was only half the puzzle. Agassi had never realized that.

"I've always had a gift," Agassi says, "and my talent has gotten me through a lot of tough things. But I've never actually understood my responsibility to that talent, which is to go out there and be so focused on what I need to do, dedicate myself and understand what I need to do to make my talent come through."

Agassi's run at Flushing Meadow was astounding in its variety. He ran through all-court powers like Martin, Wayne Ferreira and Guy Forget, beat one of the best serve-and-volleyers in Stich, shook off the tough-minded baseliner Thomas Muster and, in his most impressive win, showed himself to be fitter and scrappier in the fifth set than the master of the marathon himself, Michael Chang. In the final Agassi mixed his serves to perfection, charged and volleyed with authority and deftly lobbed over the 6′ 4″ Stich. "You know what's been the greatest?" Gilbert says. "To see him evolve over the last six months into being a great player, instead of just being a great hitter of the ball."

Yes, Agassi had won Wimbledon, but this felt different. Like many of his critics, Agassi suspected he had fallen into two wondrous weeks in England in '92, had gotten by on mindless, perfect strokes. "When I won Wimbledon, it was a relief," Agassi says. "Winning this one, I feel I've made a surge forward. There's a difference between saying, 'Wheeeww, I did it,' and saying, 'Yes. I *can* do it.' "

Strangely enough, despite the black socks, Minnie Mouse shoes and one lapse when he babbled with John McEnroe through the on-court camera, Agassi never allowed himself to be distracted by the sidelines of his career. During a tournament in which the doubles team of Luke and Murphy Jensen—cartoon characters who do everything to attract attention *except* win matches—took Agassi's rock-and-roll image to absurd extremes, Agassi was all game. "Murphy and Luke have a gig," he says. "That's never been something I've tried to create. It's always just been a part of who I am. You can bring your act, but the substance has to be what we came here for: the tennis."

This is what he carries now, at a few minutes past 4 p.m. on a September Sunday: the substance. At 24, Agassi has finally come to understand what he is supposed to do. "I can be the best player in the world," he says.

Now they are moving him along. He hustles down the stairs and into the mouth of the tunnel, Stich trailing and the bodyguards all around. He can hear the thousands outside, can see the green of the court getting bigger. His face is a blank. He isn't quivering now. "When you step onto a court," Agassi says, "it's like another person takes over. It's almost like going into a time warp, *through* something. The nerves are so intense and then you step out . . . and all of a sudden there's a sense of peace. It's incredible."

A champion arrives. ■

RAY STUBBLEBINE/REUTER

Brooke Shields and Agassi sealed victory with a smooch after Stich kissed his title hopes goodbye.

MANNY MILLAN

SWIMMING

Flora and Furor

Drug charges bloomed as China's botanically named women swimmers ruled the worlds • by Leigh Montville

Dai Guohong (above and third from left) struck gold in the 400 individual medley and the medley relay.

THE QUESTIONS made you squirm. A young Chinese woman would come into the press conference, and there would be a few softballs—How did you start swimming? Where do you go to school?—but pretty soon the tough stuff would begin, and there would be no escaping. The questions would be asked in one language—say it was English—and translated into Italian and then translated into Chinese, and then come back down the same long path. Minutes would seem to stretch into grim hours.

"How do you account for the fact that female Chinese swimmers have been so successful so fast?" a reporter would ask. "Many people accuse your swimmers of doping. What do you say to this?"

English.

Italian.

Chinese.

Response in Chinese.

Italian.

English.

"I would like to attribute our success to the brilliant coaches we have as well as to the hard work we do," someone like Le Jingyi—world-record-setting winner of the 50- and 100-meter freestyles, member of the world-record-setting 4×100 freestyle and 4×100 medley relay teams, clearly the star of last week's VII Swimming World Championships in Rome—would reply. "I am very angry about the accusations of doping. I think the main reason is that some people are jealous."

The awkward trilingual ballet of accusation and denial never varied. The Chinese women would do wondrous things every night in the bright water of the Foro Italico pool, winning 12 of 16 events, setting five world records, and then they would sit at a table in a long, narrow room, with their yellow victory flowers in their hands, and undergo this joyless interrogation. The weeklong championships—held every four years and second only to the Olympics in importance—were supposed to be a celebration of aquatic achievement, but there was little celebration of anything. Only suspicion.

Are these Chinese women—girls, really, the eldest being 19 years old—one of the stirring athletic success stories of our time? Or are they flat-out cheaters whose drug use and undetected masking agents have brought them the same success that East Germany enjoyed before the Berlin Wall came down and the truth about their success emerged? Circumstantial evidence mixed with doubts about testing have once again clouded the sport.

"A lot of our kids didn't want to stand when the Chinese national anthem was played," U.S. women's coach Richard Quick said last week. "We talked about it at a team meeting. We decided to stand, to honor the sport."

The prosecution's case, put forward loudly by U.S. officials but seconded by those of many other countries, was that

Photographs by Bob Martin

we had seen all this before. Take the fast rise of the East German women swimmers in the 1970s and '80s and place it over the seemingly sudden emergence of the Chinese, and you have what looks like a perfect fit. The East Germans appeared on the scene in waves, several swimmers suddenly knocking off world records in quick order. Well, the Chinese are no different. East Germany's heroics were largely confined to the women, while the East German men, presumably helped less by anabolic steroids, weren't nearly as accomplished. Well, the Chinese men are less accomplished still, none even making a final in Rome. East Germans occasionally skipped major competitions, probably worried about what would show up in postrace testing. Well, the Chinese also skip certain competitions. The East Germans were guilty of drug use, their coaches ultimately admitted. Well, in the last two years four Chinese women swimmers have failed drug tests.

"For 20 years our entire sport kept quiet about the Germans because we couldn't prove anything," Quick said. "The Americans who complained were brutalized in the press, called whiners. Shirley Babashoff [the U.S. star who was outswum by her East German rivals at the 1976 Olympics] complained, and everyone talked about sour grapes. I was one of the people who said she should keep quiet. Well, I apologize to Shirley. She was right. For 20 years our kids were cheated out of things they should have won, and we just sat still. I'm not sitting still now."

The defense presented by the Chinese coaches is that hard, innovative work, not drugs, has produced their champions. Unlike the East Germans, always so secretive during their reign, the Chinese propose openness. If you think we are doing something wrong, come visit our country, come watch us train. Yes, there may have been doping violations, but who can control individuals all the time?

"In three of the four drug cases, we were the ones who administered the tests and reported the results," China's coach, Chen Yunpeng, said. "We are against doping. We are for penalties for doping. Come to China. See what we are doing for yourself."

"The training methods of other countries are out of date," said Zhou Ming, one of Chen's assistants. "Because we started late in the sport, not competing in the outside world until 1982, we have been able to use many things. Always in swimming, there were two worlds: the Americans, Australians and Europeans on one side, the Eastern bloc on the other. We studied both sides and took from each. From the Americans we took coaching. The Americans are very good at mental preparation, at using emotion. From the East we took selection of talent, finding girls who are very young and working with them."

The Chinese served notice of big things to come at the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona. While there had been rumblings that they were developing a program heavy

World-beaters like Le (top) and 200 individual medleyist Lu Bin had Quick and others up in arms.

with weightlifting and workouts, their performance at the Games was still a shock. From the first women's race, the 100 freestyle, in which Zhuang Yong blasted past U.S. world-record holder Jenny Thompson, the Chinese were a presence. Their top five women, nicknamed the Five Golden Flowers after a popular Chinese movie of the '50s, earned four gold medals and five silvers.

Amazingly, none of the Golden Flowers came to Rome. Four have retired, and one was not selected for this year's team, which had 12 swimmers illogically nicknamed the 10 Little Flowers. At home were even younger world-class swimmers, nicknamed the 20 Little, Little Flowers, part of the class that will arrive in time for the 1996 Atlanta Games.

"The West had too many older champions here," Zhou said in Rome. "Look at the swimmers from Barcelona, and you will see they did not do well here. Swimming is a four-year cycle. For the Olympics you are at your best, the first year after that you take it easy, the second year is recovery, the third year you push and the fourth you are ready. The Golden Flowers would have been the same as the other Barcelona swimmers if they were here. That is why they are retired, living nice lives."

Zhou has been Le's personal coach for seven years, since Le was 12. The West says the Chinese are overnight sensations? Zhou rolled out Le's best times for each year in the 100 free from memory—1:11 in 1988, 1:03 in '89, 1:00 in '90, 58 seconds in '91, 55.8 in '92, 54.27 in '93—an improvement that continued in Rome, where she swam a world-record 54.01 in the 100 final and turned in a 53.81 relay split as part of China's eye-widening 4:01.67 world record in the 4×100 medley relay. Zhou said Le's secret was an athletic body, which he spotted when she was young, plus a lot of work and an athletic disposition.

"She has the right psychology for sports," he said. "If she lost tonight, maybe she would cry for an hour or so, but after that she would be laughing. She does not carry one day into the next. She keeps working."

The detractors, alas, noticed mostly her broad shoulders. How did she develop those shoulders? Reporters spotted acne across her forehead and cheeks. Wasn't that a sign of steroid use? A television production assistant suggested that a tape of her might be shown with subtitles, to allow viewers to listen to her low voice. Wasn't a low voice also a sign of steroids? On and on it went.

The Italian newspaper *Corriere dello Sport* ran a cartoon of a muscular Chinese swimmer named Jing Do-ping. Another paper ran a picture of a Chinese woman's back with the question "Who is this sports celebrity?" One of the possible answers listed was "Mike Tyson."

Before the end of the meet on Sunday, a position statement was issued by swimming officials from 18 countries asking the sport's governing body, FINA, to use "financial resources, manpower and technology" to resolve the "potentially devastating problem" of "the extensive use of performance-enhancing drugs."

"But what'll be done?" one U.S. sports official said. "I don't think the people who run FINA even care. They just want everybody to keep quiet."

The sole U.S. women's gold medal winner was the irrepressible Janet Evans, in the 800 meters. She was asked if she knew any of the young Chinese swimmers, if she had any social contact with them.

"Oh, no," the 23-year-old Evans replied. "I don't even know who they are. What would we talk about?"

She said the U.S. swimmers' relationship with the Chinese was much the same as it had been with the East Germans until the Wall came down: no relationship at all. After that, though, pleasant changes had occurred. Talk began. Everyone laughed and told stories.

"They were funny, it turned out, the East Germans," she said. "One night, after the Wall, three or four of them came through the lobby, and they were all wearing these black leather miniskirts. They said they were going out on the town. They had never been able to do this, all these years. This was their first night out. The next morning we were eating breakfast and the East Germans came through the restaurant, and they were wearing the same black leather miniskirts. They'd been out all night."

Someone asked whether this would happen again. Would the Chinese someday be seen going out for just such a night?

"It'll never happen," Evans replied.

This seemed to be the saddest accusation of all. ■

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FORTY FOR THE AGES

Welcome to this gathering of honored guests: the 40 individuals who have most significantly altered or elevated the world of sports in the last four decades

by GARY SMITH

WHAT STRIKES ME FIRST, AS THEY ENTER the banquet room for this 40th anniversary celebration, is their diversity. Country boys, crusaders, doctors, daredevils, con artists, saints. Blacks, whites, Latinos, Canadians, a Czech, a Brazilian and a Belarussian to boot. What strikes me second is that even the deceased are here—and if Bear Bryant and Roberto Clemente agreed to come, how could the reluctant ones, like Bill Russell and Larry Bird, possibly refuse?

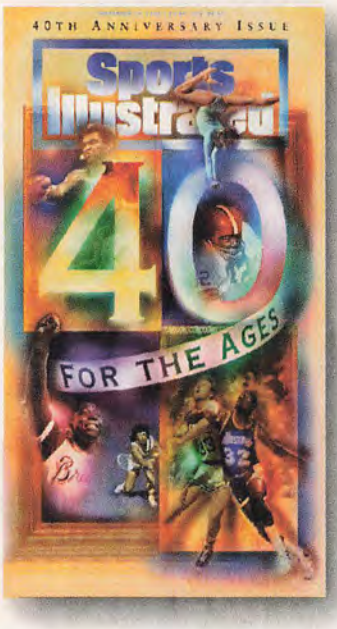
Everyone turns to the doorway now; the rattling of ice cubes and cocktail glasses halts. Muhammad Ali slowly enters. A voice booms: *"If it isn't . . . the great . . . Mooo-ham-ad Ahh-leeeee!"* It's Howard Cosell imitating Howard Cosell.

I hang on the fringes of the gathering, feigning dignity and nonchalance. More discussion is being spent on those who *aren't* on the list than on those who are. Clemente can't fathom why he's here but Willie Mays and Mickey Mantle aren't, not realizing that in the final reckoning, lasting significance outweighed pure achievement. John Wooden can't believe Jackie Robinson, Ted Williams, Joe DiMaggio and Roger Bannister aren't here, not recognizing that their main contributions came before SI's birth in 1954. Julius Erving asks Magic Johnson where Wilt Chamberlain is, and Richard Petty is feeling bad for A.J. Foyt. Meanwhile, everyone is lamenting the evening's one no-show among the invitees—Secretariat could have made a hell of an entrance.

Ali is shown to the head of the table as the others settle into their places. My head spins, trying to decide

which conversations to listen in on. If I opt for the chat between Billie Jean King and Pete Rose, am I not certain to miss something priceless between Pelé and Olga Korbut, between Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus?

As the spinach salad is being served, a Profound Truth occurs to me. In an age when TV, cars and air conditioning isolate us from each other more and more, think of all the human issues we've been drawn into by these 40 people. Because of them, haven't even those of us who have used sports to shut out life been forced to *face* life? To consider, as we stretch out in front of our televisions, the stigma of skin color and sexuality; to confront debilitating addictions, deadly disease, alternative religions, overwhelming generosity and greed. Why lament it? If sports has become America's most-shared human experience, its most public banquet—which it *has* in these last 40 years—then why shouldn't the whole human story, all its wonders and woes, be spilled on its table?



I notice that the guests have begun, in turn, approaching Ali to speak a few quiet words, letting him know what he has meant to them in their own quests. It brings a hush to the table, this homage-paying, a hush broken when Joe Namath cracks a joke and Russell lets out one of his chandelier-shattering cackles. By the time the baby lamb chops are served, the passion that has made these 40 people extraordinary is beginning to push all social awkwardness out of the way. The room is abuzz.

The late Dr. Harold Gores is trying to explain to Joe Montana that it's not his fault that AstroTurf, born of Gores's dream for inner-city schoolyards, landed instead on the floors of 60,000-seat stadiums. Greg LeMond is telling Michael Jordan how it feels to blur down one of the Pyrenees within whiskers of wild-eyed Basques. Dr. Robert Jackson is rhapsodizing on the miracle of the arthroscope to Bobby Orr, whose joints betrayed him after one decade, and Nolan Ryan, whose hinges held up for nearly three. Gary Davidson, the guy who helped found three renegade leagues, is leaning across Jim Fixx as he tries to sell his latest real estate venture to Don King. Roone Arledge is explaining the creative impulse behind the camera tricks he introduced to televised sports, while Dr. J and Wayne Gretzky are nodding, realizing how the ABC wizard's art acted as midwife for the art of nearly everyone at this table.

I'm floating here and there, discreet as the butter knife, eavesdropping shamelessly. One spin around the table is all it takes to identify the three most powerful currents of sports' last 40 years. They're talking television—Arledge and ESPN founder Bill Rasmussen are trying to explain their medium's lust for games, admitting that the tube simply can't find anyone who can write drama or invent spontaneity half as purely as those gathered at this table have lived it on our screens.

They're talking big bucks—superagent Mark McCormack, union chief Marvin Miller and NFL czar Pete Rozelle are holding court at mid-table on the volcanic changes wrought by marketing and money. And down at the far end, they're talking the rise of the black athlete. Hank Aaron, Arthur Ashe and Jim Brown are dominating that conversation, keeping Ray Leonard and Carl Lewis rapt with war stories that reveal how deep the scars run. Aaron is talking about the vermin that emerged during his pursuit of the home run record, and Martina Navratilova is saying, Yes, Henry, but you know, if you're lucky enough to last and strong enough not to curl up, sheer endurance can turn it around. How much harder it becomes for people to cling to hatreds when someone who embodies that which they fear keeps smiling and sticking his head in the fire each week on their family-room TVs.

It's after midnight when Cosell poses the question I've been burning to ask all night. As Bear Bryant is reaching for his houndstooth hat, Howard asks him to describe The Other Side. In that deep, gravelly voice the Bear starts sizing up Auburn, giving everyone the perfect laugh to exit on.

As the guests file out, I can't help overhearing the three busboys who have begun to clear the table. "What a joke!" the short one's saying. "Don friggin' King over Vince Lombardi!"

"Lombardi?" the tall, thin one's snorting. "I'm scrapin' off Peggy Fleming's plate instead of Gordie Howe's!"

"I'm tellin' ya both," the fat, sweaty one's saying, "this list is a slap in the face to Sadaharu Oh. . . ." ■

LETTERING BY RICHARD TUSCHMAN

1

MUHAMMAD ALI

BEHIND THE WHEEL OF HIS ROLLS-ROYCE, tooling north on a two-lane highway in southern Michigan, Muhammad Ali was heading home to Berrien Springs one December afternoon in 1991 when all at once he crunched the brakes and swerved to the shoulder, raising a bloom of dust from the road. Turning hard to the left, he did a quick U-turn across the highway and slowly drove back about 200 yards to where a small party of college students, like mourners at a wake, stood solemnly around the raised hood of their car. Parking in front of them, Ali climbed out and walked unsteadily to the rear of his Rolls. Back in the 1970s, when Ali was trotting the globe, there were whole countries that couldn't pick Jimmy Carter out of a lineup but recognized Ali at a glance. His face was the most familiar on earth, and wherever he went the whispers always went up—"Ali . . . Ali . . ."—as crowds moiled around him in rural villages and city streets, and the world's children, trying to get a foothold on his lap, clambered up him as if on a backyard oak.

Now he was turning 50, and while age and Parkinson's syndrome had stolen the graceful swank and unending banter of old, the moon-cheeked visage was still as familiar and seductive as ever. "Isn't that. . . ?" whispered a wide-eyed young female student. Her companion rolled his eyes. Moments later, after fishing around in his trunk, Ali was observed standing on the side of the road trying to untangle a set of jumper cables. Honking trucks and cars roared by. Hands waved yoo-hoo from passing windows. A car in the far lane skidded to a stop and backed up to where Ali was; four white faces appeared, pumpkinlike, in two windows and said, "Ali, we love you! You are the greatest!"

And there was the three-time heavyweight champion of the world holding the cables in his left hand while blowing kisses to the pumpkins with his right.

Ali fought professionally for more than 20 years, from 1960 to 1981, and his life was so brassy and daring, so filled with wonders and adventure, and so enlarged by the magic of his personality and the play of his mind that no one remotely like him has ever been seen on the sporting scene. Dancer, poet, fighter, mime, he was sui generis—the most gifted and unforgettable athlete-performer of his time. He inspired the era of globally televised megabuck fights, but no stage was ever large enough for his range of expression.

"I'm bigger than boxing," he used to say, and he was. Ali came of age during a period of social upheaval growing out of the civil-rights movement and the Vietnam War, and he not only came to personify the turbulent '60s but also became one of the decade's most hated figures. In 1964, as the world's new heavyweight champion, he broke from the nation's Judeo-Christian tradition by joining the Nation of Islam and changing his name from Cassius Clay; and then, in 1967, he stirred the country's patriotic gore by refusing induction into the armed forces on the grounds that he was a Muslim minister. "I ain't got nothing against them Viet Congs," Ali said.

As punishment, at the age of 25 he was stripped by boxing authorities of his title and consigned to a 43-month exile from which, in some ways, he never recovered. The ban divided his boxing

Photograph by NEIL LEIFER, 1970

career into halves. In the first, during which he whipped Sonny Liston for the title in 1964 and then toyed with the likes of Cleveland Williams and Zora Folley, he was a 210-pound man who moved around the ring like a lightweight, with darting hands and the quickest feet ever owned by a big fighter. In fact, young Ali was rarely punished for having failed to learn the most fundamental ring skills. Instead of bobbing under hooks and slipping straight punches, he used his reflexes to escape punches by moving or leaning backward—sins for which ordinary mortals would have paid heavily.

By his return from exile, however, he was 28, and his idleness had stolen those surpassing legs and left him a slower, more vulnerable target. The intriguing irony of his career is that his two most inspired, memorable triumphs—his eight-round knockout of George Foreman in Kinshasa, Zaire, on Oct. 30, 1974, to regain the title stolen from him in 1967, and his 14-round war with Joe Frazier 11 months later in Manila—came years after he had lost his best stuff. Surely nothing else that Ali ever did inside the ropes was quite as spectacular as his dismemberment of Foreman, who had arrived in Africa with a menacing glower and a ring history that had Ali followers fearing for their man's life.

Fearing no one, Ali alone was unmoved. He had been promising for weeks to pull off the greatest miracle since "the resurrection of Christ," and Hugh McIlvanney, in his column for *The Observer* of London, expressed most eloquently the stunning turn of events in that Sunday's newspaper, writing, "We should have known that Muhammad Ali would not settle for

Photograph by
NEIL LEIFER, 1964

any ordinary old resurrection. His had to have an additional flourish. So, having rolled away the rock, he hit George Foreman on the head with it."

His skills, though, grew ever more diminished through time and trial. Even in his other signature fight, the Thrilla in Manila, Ali took 440 blows from Frazier, many of them murderous left hooks. Two of Ali's greatest virtues as a fighter, the depth of his bravery and the strength of his chin, worked their wickedness on him in the end. He took some terrible punishment, and that bravery and that chin kept him standing there, lolling wearily on the ropes, long after the rest of him had vanished.

If Ali was not the greatest of all time—and a more persuasive case can be made for him than for any other prizefighter—he is certainly the most important figure that the game has ever produced and its largest, most charismatic performer. Today, navigating the sweet land of liberty and religious freedom, he is as loved and embraced as he was once scorned and despised. Now they gather round him in airports. Now they wave to him from passing cars. Now they stand back watching him untangle jumper cables.

He never did get that car started, but he gave two students a lift back to campus. As he was about to leave, the wide-eyed student approached him hesitantly, in a whisper. Standing by his car, Ali took out a pamphlet on Islam, signed it and handed it to her. Then he leaned forward and pointed to his left cheek. Cautiously, she leaned forward and kissed it. Opening his arms, he swooned grandly and fell back against the car, as if in a faint; little wide-eyes stepped back with a startled laugh. Ali had fooled 'em all again. Coming to, he grinned. And winked. — WILLIAM NACK

MICHAEL JORDAN

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, AS MICHAEL JORDAN WAS ZIPPING THROUGH A suburban Chicago parking lot in his white Porsche, two speeding cars suddenly appeared in his rearview mirror. Jordan braked, and the cars screeched to a halt, one on each side of him. A young kid jumped from one car holding a sweat suit he had designed for Jordan, while an older fellow leaped from the other, imploring Jordan to listen to his rap tape "about the greatest basketball player on earth." Jordan politely indulged them both for a few moments, then shook his head. As he drove away, he turned to his passenger and said, "That kind of stuff happens all the time."

For roughly five years, beginning in his rookie season of 1985 with the Chicago Bulls, Michael Jeffrey Jordan was America's superstar teddy bear, the approachable one, the demigod of the masses. He crossed all lines—gender, race, age—as smoothly as he crossed over his dribble. He had no hidden agenda, no dark side, and so his appeal was uncomplicated and thoroughly wonderful. He played, he dunked, he stuck out his tongue, he smiled. We swooned.

Corporations slavered in his size-13 footsteps. Before Jordan's arrival on the scene, Converse had told its superstar stable—Julius Erving, Magic Johnson and Larry Bird among them—that the public wasn't interested in buying sneakers bearing the name of only a single player. Nike, by contrast, hitched its star to Jordan's popularity and leaped to the top of the athletic sportswear heap. His endorsement deals were voluminous and lucrative, and the reach of his global marketing was unprecedented for an athlete. In the early '90s, Jordan's annual income was estimated at $30 million, with only one tenth of that emanating from his basketball paycheck.

A few early detractors whispered that he was being overhyped. Jordan heard them. So the "overrated rookie" went out and scored 63 and 49 points in two memorable playoff games against the Celtics in Boston Garden. The guy who "couldn't play defense" turned himself into a tenacious stopper who six times made the NBA's All-Defensive Team. The player who "didn't make his teammates better" led the Bulls to three straight NBA titles.

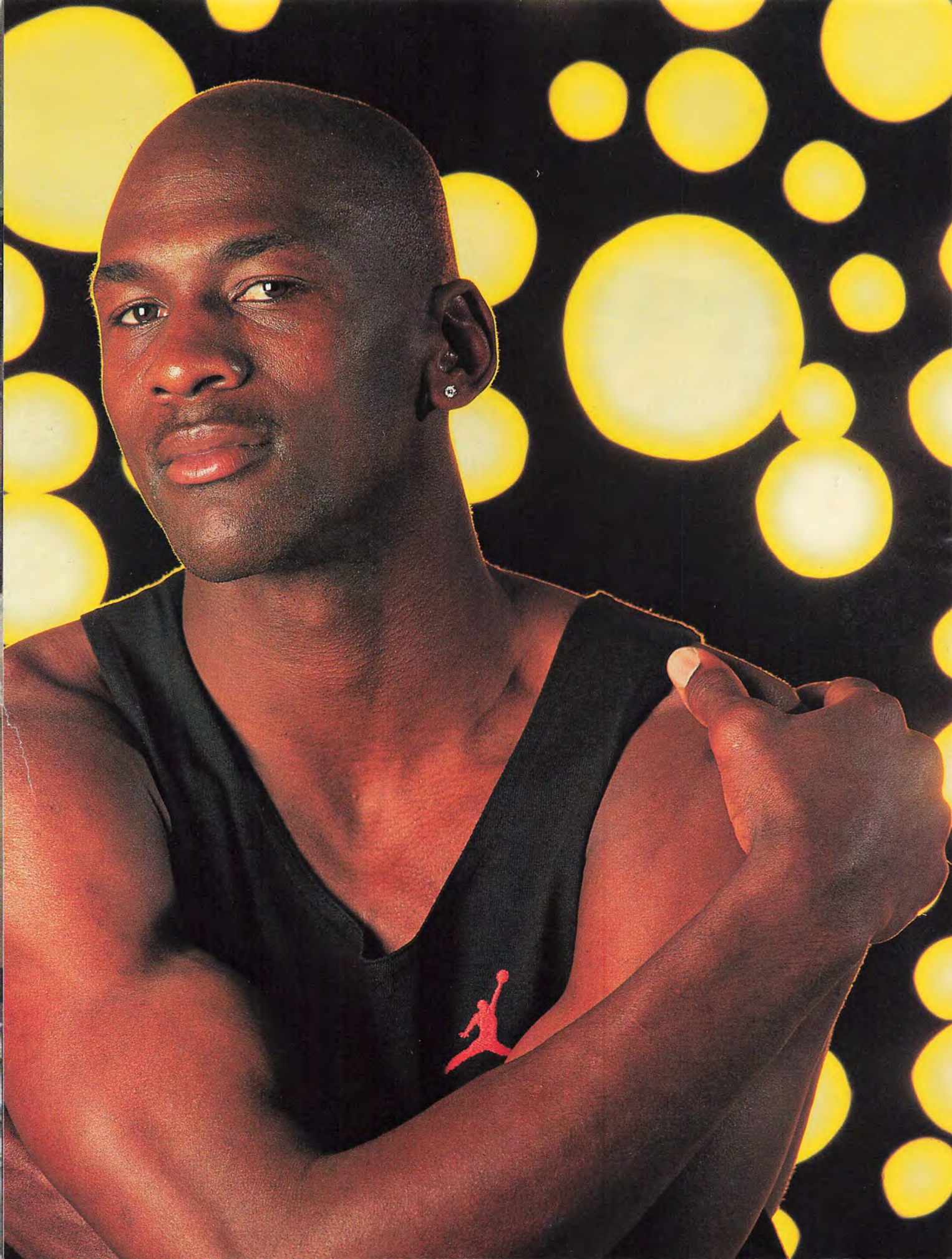
But, inevitably perhaps, a storm front moved in and hung over Jordan's sun-drenched success story. The self-assuredness that compelled him to call for the ball in virtually every crucial situation? It also compelled him to denigrate his teammates, as chronicled in the 1991 best-selling book *The Jordan Rules*. The competitiveness that burned within him and propelled him to the top? It was also manifested in a gambling habit that, according to some, ran into the millions of dollars. The childlike quality that endeared him to everyone? Prominent African-Americans said that Jordan turned his back on black issues. The Midas touch that reached from America's boardrooms into America's ghetto? Kids killed one another for a pair of his extravagantly priced brand-name sneakers. The negativity gnawed at Jordan. "Maybe we shouldn't have worked so hard to present a positive image," he ruminated one day during the 1991–92 season, several months after he had led the Bulls to their first championship. "But our thinking was always that people want to see a positive role model, someone who gets along with everyone. I guess people just got tired of seeing me succeed."

On Aug. 3, 1993, James Jordan, Michael's beloved father, who had held his son like a baby when the superstar broke down after the Bulls won their first title and had been at Michael's side through most of his successes, was found dead in a South Carolina creek. Media types speculated on a connection between the reported gambling debts of the son and the death of the father, conjecture that has never found substantiation. It further soured Jordan on the media and caused him to reassess the price of fame. Two months later, in a shocking announcement, Jordan retired from basketball and began satisfying a lifelong dream of playing professional baseball.

At this writing, Jordan, 31, is wrapping up a season as the most famous .200-hitting outfielder in history. Some say he is marking time until he returns to the NBA; Jordan says he is through. But the fact remains that no one in history has played the game of basketball as spectacularly well as Michael Jordan. Game after game, year after year, the man was *better* than his hype. And that is his most enduring accomplishment.

—JACK MCCALLUM

Photograph by DAVID STRICK/ONYX, 1991



abc
GRENOBLE - 1968

3 ROONE ARLEDGE

HE WAS THE EMMY-AWARD-WINNING PRODUCER OF A PUPPET SHOW when he left NBC for ABC Sports in 1960. But Roone Arledge felt more like the Emmy itself—a gilded figure with wings, the whole world held in his cupped hands—as he prepared for his new assignment: producing college football telecasts. "Friends told me that I'd be bored producing sports," recalls Arledge, his ruddy face reflected in the dozens of Emmys that now cover a wall of his ABC office. "But there were all of these things that I wanted to bring to sports on television. It struck me that there was so much beauty to work with, such a journalistic opportunity here."

Thirty-four years later television is largely responsible for having made sports the global and moneyed enterprise that it is, and Roone Arledge is largely responsible for having made sports on television look and sound and *succeed* the way it does. He made the Olympics a quadrennial television spectacle in part by showcasing figure skating and gymnastics and track and field on *Wide World of Sports*. He created not only *Wide World of Sports* but also *The American Sportsman* and *Monday Night Football*. Howard Cosell is the unholy offspring of Roone Pinckney Arledge Jr. as surely as Dr. Frankenstein birthed his own monster. All of Arledge's programs, in fact, served as a kind of mad-science laboratory in which he and his engineers helped to pioneer the use of handheld cameras and isolation cameras and underwater cameras and split screens and field microphones and graphics superimposed on action.

Named president of ABC Sports in 1968, Arledge was the staff bearer who led the NFL into prime time two years later with *Monday Night Football*. Soon the World Series and the Super Bowl followed, sheeplike, into this klieg-lighted land of milk and money. Likewise the Olympics: In 1972 the Summer Games in Munich were broadcast almost entirely in prime time by ABC. The medium would never be the same.

Beginning early on the morning of Sept. 5 in Munich, after 11 Israeli athletes and coaches were taken hostage by Palestinian terrorists, Arledge coordinated 18 continuous hours of network coverage, with Jim McKay anchoring field reports from Cosell and Peter Jennings. One day after the Israelis were killed, Arledge produced and aired a documentary on the tragedy. ABC won 29 Emmys for its Munich coverage and "changed television itself," according to authors Marc Gunther and Bill Carter in their book, *Monday Night Mayhem*. "From then on, whenever a catastrophe struck, viewers no longer were content to wait for film at eleven; they expected television to afford them a chance to be eyewitnesses to history." In 1977 Arledge was made president of ABC News as well as Sports. Jennings would become his anchorman.

Now 63 and the president of ABC News exclusively, Arledge can see his own influence on the nine television screens in his office, in everything from CNN to the O.J. Simpson saturation coverage. But much of his legacy is more subtle. Arledge refused, for instance, to give the NFL, Major League Baseball and Olympic organizing committees the right to approve his announcers, which was standard practice in TV contracts only 25 years ago. "Obviously, that's all changed," says Arledge. "With ESPN and sports-talk shows and call-in radio, you wouldn't *dream* of having announcers approved today."

But in 1968 his stance was outrageous. He broke a network blacklist to use Cosell, who piqued many Americans by calling broadcast partner Muhammad Ali by his chosen Muslim name at the '68 Olympics. "Of course, being named *Roone* myself," says Arledge, "I wasn't about to quarrel with anyone who wanted to be called something else." In truth, he was giving viewers what they wanted—candor—before they knew they wanted it, a talent of his that is uncanny.

At another Olympics, in Lake Placid a dozen years later, ABC was serving the nation a Miracle on Ice. But all that Arledge heard the cabbies and bellhops talking about were the American hostages in Iran. He told his news staff that he wanted the story on *every* night. "When it was midnight here," Arledge explains, "it was eight in the morning in Iran, and we could sign off saying that the hostages had survived another night." Unbeknownst even to himself, he had just created *Nightline*. The Arledgian legend beat on.

— STEVE RUSHIN

Photograph by ABC TV, 1968

4

JIM BROWN

IN THE SUMMER OF 1966, ON THE LONDON SET OF "THE DIRTY DOZEN," Jim Brown, the world's greatest running back and an aspiring movie actor, could be found playing touch football at lunchtime with members of the film crew. On July 13 a few news agencies received calls indicating that the Cleveland Brown star had something to say. A handful of reporters showed up on the set, and Brown, without ceremony, announced that he was retiring from football, immediately.

"I quit with regret but no sorrow," he said that day. "I've been able to do all the things I wanted to do, and now I want to devote my time to other things. And I wanted more mental stimulation than I would have had playing football."

Brown was 30. For a decade he had dominated pro football like no player ever had. He had won the rushing title in eight of his nine NFL seasons and had been elected the 1965 MVP. It is possible that had he continued to play, he would have put all the league's rushing records so far out of reach that they would have been only a distant dream—like Joe DiMaggio's hitting streak—to the runners who followed him. As it is, his most telling number is 5.22, which was Brown's average yards per carry over nine years.

The relative brevity of Brown's career has only added to his mystique. His numbers in that final year—1,544 yards, 5.3 yards per carry, 17 touchdowns—all bettered his season average to that point. And four games from the end of his career, according to many Brownophiles, he made his best run of all. On Nov. 21, 1965, in Dallas, the Browns and the Cowboys were tied 3–3 in the second quarter; Cleveland had a fourth-and-one at the Dallas three. Brown took a handoff and tried to run around left end, but three Cowboy defenders forced him to retreat to the 10-yard line. He then steamed ahead. At the five, Dallas linebacker Dave Edwards had both his arms wrapped around Brown's legs, but Brown, with his right hand on the ground, kept churning. Near the goal line he smashed into three Dallas defenders and then lunged forward. Touchdown.

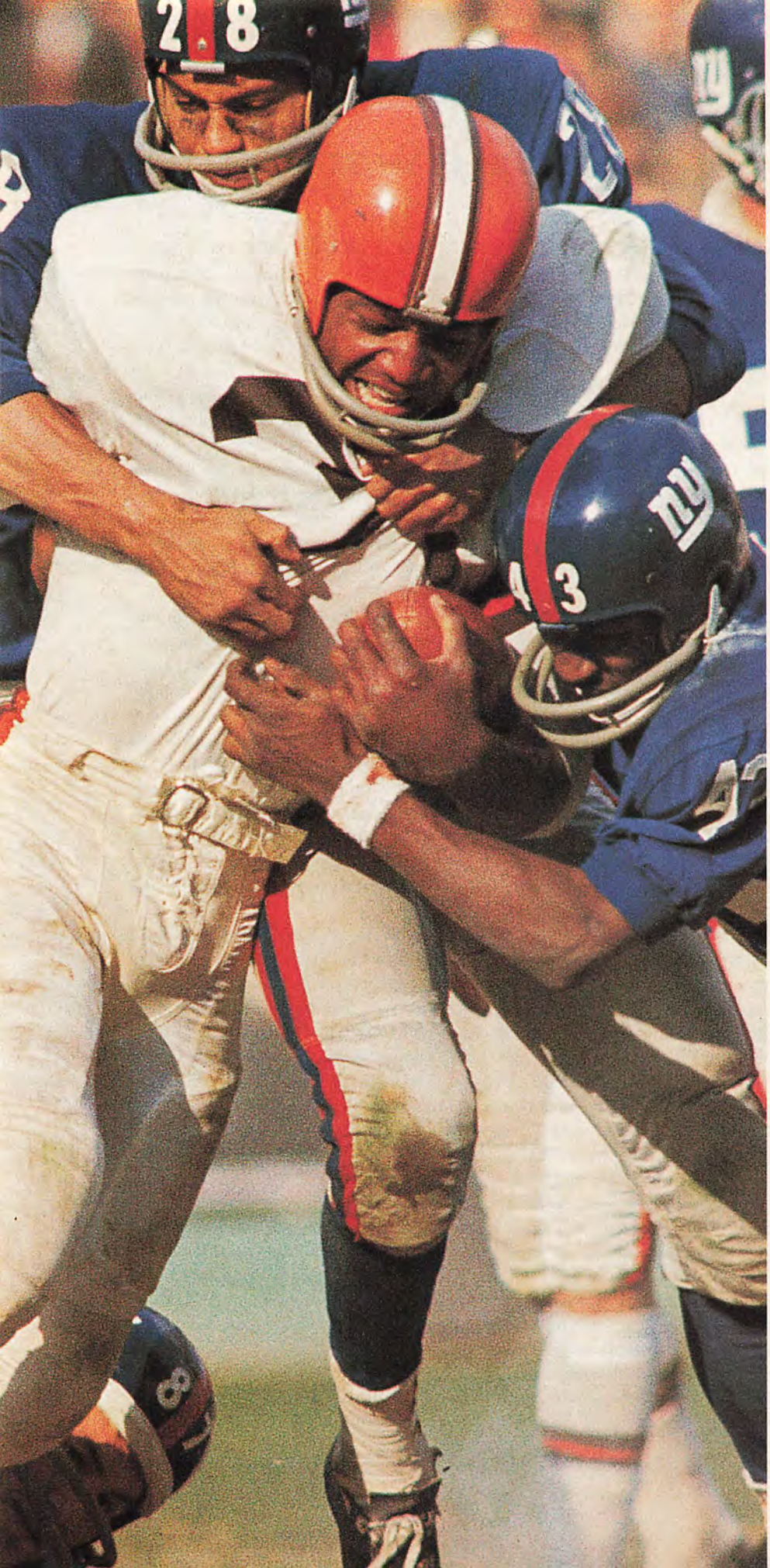
Two months later, Brown was out of uniform forever. "All through my career I was always looking to not stay too long," he would say. "For all the guys who stayed too long—Joe Louis, Muhammad Ali—I thought it was embarrassing. People had sympathy for them, and you should never have sympathy for a champion."

He was the consummate athlete. In his college days at Syracuse, Brown was a track and field phenom and the finest lacrosse player anyone had ever seen. He was even drafted by the Syracuse Nationals of the NBA. But the gridiron was his chosen field. He was a 230-pound shifty brick who steamrollered defenders, punishing tacklers more than he got punished. "It's like tackling a locomotive," defensive tackle Glenn Holtzman of the Los Angeles Rams said after facing Brown in 1958. Former New York Giant linebacker Sam Huff still wears a scar across the bridge of his nose from an encounter with Brown: Huff's nose was crushed by the force of his own helmet crashing down on it. Two of his teeth were shattered. Huff doesn't remember a thing about the collision. "I woke up on the trainer's table," he said later. Very likely Brown rose from this same crash in the deliberate way he rose from all others: slowly unfolding each body part, walking haltingly back to the huddle as if pained and exhausted, all the while conserving his energy for the next collision. In his nine-year professional career, Brown never missed a game.

Being a football star, though, was not enough for Brown, nor was being a movie actor. His largest role has been as a social activist, as a man who could not turn his back on the needs of the black community. He cared about an urban society that was devouring its youth, and he set out to do something about it, spending most of his time working with kids in the worst neighborhoods of Los Angeles—his home—and other American cities. "I have never done anything more important," he has said, "than working for social change."

Brown's reputation has been clouded, however, by a series of ugly episodes of alleged assault against women, beginning in 1965 and recurring in '68 and, most recently, '86. Though in each case either the charges were dropped or Brown was found not guilty, the incidents have contrib-

Photograph by NEIL LEIFER, 1964



uted to a confused image of the man, who is nothing if not enigmatic. "We all have our negatives and our positives," he says.

His positives have been many. In 1987, after years of the kind of inner-city work largely foreign to the self-absorbed athletes of this era, Brown started the Amer-I-Can program, an effort to reintegrate gang members into productive society. Brown sought out young people who he felt were serious about changing their lives and put them through a 60-hour curriculum aimed at building self-esteem and a feeling of empowerment.

He tells his charges, "Success is not only for the elite. Success is there for those who want it, plan for it and take action to achieve it." And while Brown has been putting "my gangsters," as he likes to call them, into sporting-goods management and security firms, he has bluntly criticized high-profile black athletes such as Magic Johnson, Charles Barkley and Michael Jordan for not lending a bigger hand to the disenfranchised men and women who worship them. "If I had the participation of the top 20 athletes in this country," Brown said recently of his program, "we could probably create a nationwide gang truce."

Brown, now 58, also serves as a consultant to his former team, counseling players about life in and out of football. Last season, after a Cleveland win, Brown walked through the cramped locker room, his arm around hero-of-the-day Eric Metcalf, whispering something to him. "Look at Jim Brown," said running back Ron Wolfley. "What a man. If we could all do what he does, we'd have a pretty great country."

— PETER KING

Photograph by
FOCUS ON SPORTS, 1965

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BILLIE JEAN KING

TENNIS IS BILLIE JEAN KING'S PASSION, BUT ACTIVISM IS HER TRUE game. Her 39 Grand Slam titles in singles, doubles and mixed doubles may have been, by her own standards, the least of her many accomplishments. She isn't happy unless she is championing a cause, whether it's professionalism on the court or feminism in the world at large.

Everything she has done seemed urgent. Billie Jean, the fireman's daughter, came at you with sirens blaring. On the tennis court she was a streak of blue-suede sneakers and sequined lapels, a flash of dressed-up muscle and discontent. Her aggressive serve-and-volley style was politically significant: When in doubt, she charged, and with that philosophy she shifted the spectrum of female possibilities from the decorative to the active and helped to Frankenstein a generation of women athletes.

Her first cause was to take tennis out of the country clubs and straight to the public, and she became a significant force in changing the culture of the sport from old-time elitism to modern professionalism. A sense of mission burgeoned in her as an amateur on the public courts of Long Beach, Calif., where she fought for equal consideration with the resort-bred players. She struggled through Los Angeles State College as a playground instructor while making Grand Slam finals. When she won her first Wimbledon singles title, in 1966, she received a £50 gift voucher good for buying tennis wear. Her only other compensation was a half-dozen Mars bars, which some of her fellow players left in her room by way of congratulations.

Radicalized by those experiences, King, in 1968, joined with Rod Laver, Roy Emerson and a handful of other greats to demand prize money at all tournaments. Soon after, King helped to found the women's professional tour. She was the star, mother figure and most tireless promoter of the circuit, handing out leaflets on street corners before playing her matches. Along the way she became the first woman athlete to win $100,000 in a single year, 1971. (Today the Women's Tennis Association tour offers $35 million in prize money.) Later she founded World Team Tennis, which used rock music and carnival-like promotions to lure fans to matches.

Then came the Pigs versus Libs debate. King's Battle of the Sexes victory over Bobby Riggs in 1973 was, despite its comical trappings, a triumph of sorts for the women's movement. The political and personal stakes were so high that night in Houston that the normally impervious King threw up in the locker room beforehand. More than 30,000 people flocked to the Astrodome, where they saw King, 29, borne in on a throne. Then she defeated the 55-year-old Riggs 6–4, 6–3, 6–3 in what was a precursor of today's made-for-television sports spectacles. The tennis was awful, but King's victory meant something. With it, insidious notions about the desire and ability of women to compete in the big time fell away. "Before that," King says with a touch of hyperbole, "women were chokers and spastics who couldn't take pressure. Except, of course, in childbirth."

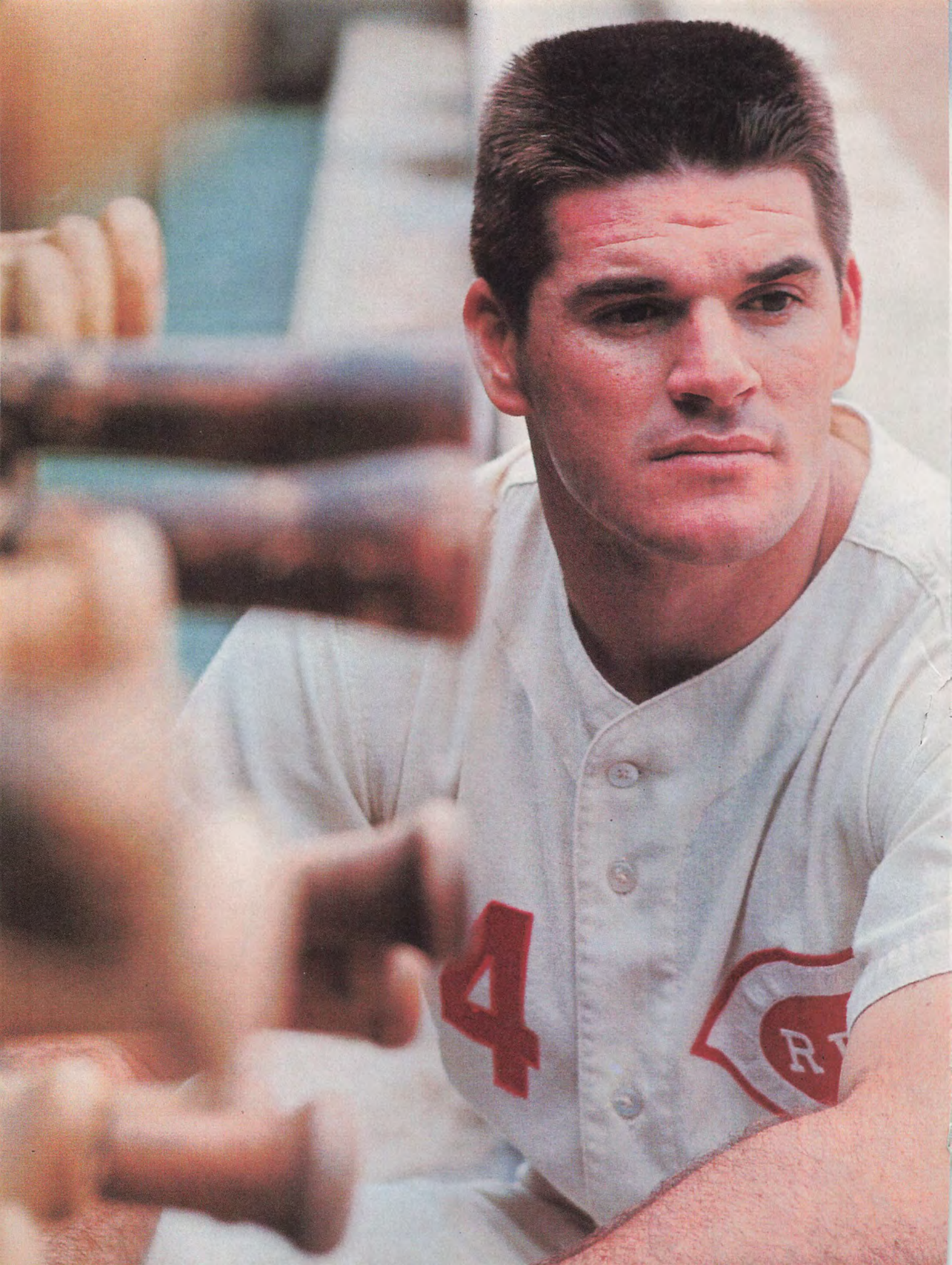
So every time a little girl beats her brother in a game of pop-a-shot or a sorority girl plays flag football, you might credit King. There is little in the realm of sports for women that she did not help nurture. Among other things, she was a vocal advocate of establishing college athletic scholarships for women through Title IX legislation; she helped create the Women's Sports Foundation, a fund-raising organization for amateur athletes; and she helped found *Women Sports* magazine (now *Women's Sport & Fitness*), which shared her conviction that you did not need a male genetic imprint to read about athletics.

King translated her achievements on the field of play into a powerful course of action off the field. And she may not be done yet: This is, after all, the woman who made the Wimbledon semifinals at 39. Now 50, she helps promote team tennis and does Wimbledon commentary for HBO, and she is a leading proponent of change in the women's tour. Outside of tennis, one of her chief interests is the Discovery Zone, a network of playlands for children in which King was an early and impassioned investor. At Discovery Zones girls and boys climb ropes, scoot through tunnels and dive into piles of brightly colored balls, playing together in an atmosphere that fosters coeducational physical development. Says King, "It's equal."

— SALLY JENKINS

Photograph by JUNE HARRISON, 1978

Bancroft



6 PETE ROSE

PETE ROSE HARDLY SEEMED THE STUFF OF ARISTOTELIAN POETICS. ORDINARY in appearance and demeanor, sometimes crude, occasionally even vulgar, he certainly didn't reflect the Greek ideal of the Great Man. But through a combination of unabashed enthusiasm, sly intelligence and unshakable self-confidence, he did, in fact, achieve a form of greatness. And he had within him the Aristotelian "fatal flaw" that led inevitably to his tragic fall.

Rose knew there were players of greater skill. He also knew no one could outplay him. "If you have a guy equal in ability to me, I'm gonna beat him, because I'll try harder," he once explained. "That guy ain't got no chance."

His ballplaying contemporaries, wealthy businessmen disguised in baseball apparel, regarded Rose with amusement. They called him, derisively, Charlie Hustle. Rose took the insult as a commendation. He seemed to have come from an earlier time when professionals always played hard, and out of joy, not greed. Playing ball for money, he said, "is a license to steal. I'd play this game for nothing . . . if I could afford it." He retired as one of baseball's highest-paid practitioners.

On and on he played, 24 years in all, remorselessly surpassing the achievements of the mortals until finally, on Sept. 11, 1985, before an ecstatic hometown crowd in Cincinnati, he lined a single to left center off San Diego pitcher Eric Show to succeed Ty Cobb as the game's most prolific hitmaker. The fans cheered him, a Cincinnati native, for a full seven minutes, and so did millions of television watchers across the country. Rose wept openly standing on first base after this, his 4,192nd hit, as his son, Pete Jr., rushed onto the field to embrace him. Looking heavenward, Rose claimed he could see both Cobb and Pete's beloved father, Harry Francis Rose, applauding from celestial box seats. "Cobb was in the second row," he observed. "Dad was in the first."

Rose would play one more season. He would finish his career with more hits (4,256), games played (3,562), times at bat (14,053), singles (3,215) and seasons with 200 or more hits (10) than anyone who ever played major league baseball. He is the only man to have played more than 500 games at five different positions—first base, second, third, leftfield and rightfield. But it wasn't so much the record-busting that made Rose such an appealing national icon; it was the sheer gusto with which he played the game, the belly-sliding, glove-banging intensity he brought to the ballpark every day. And at a time when plutocratic athletes were just beginning to distance themselves from the paying customers and the working press, Pete Rose was there for everyone, signing autographs, delivering extemporaneous speeches, tirelessly submitting to interviews. He was as genuinely popular a player as the modern game has known. It remained only for the Hall of Fame to put the final seal of approval on his remarkable career.

Alas, he remains that sanctum's most conspicuous absentee, for Pete Rose, who would have played baseball for free, was also a compulsive gambler. He made no secret of his habit. He was often seen at racetracks, and, like millions of Americans, he bet openly on football games. But his gambling, like his relentless pursuit of Cobb's record, became an obsession, soon involving him with unsavory characters, quickly placing him heavily in their debt. At first the baseball hierarchy was content to turn a blind eye, but late in Rose's career, commissioner Peter Ueberroth and his successor, A. Bartlett Giamatti, regarded his malefactions far less tolerantly. Ueberroth ordered an investigation in 1989, which was concluded under Giamatti and which revealed that Rose was betting on baseball, quite probably on the very team he was managing, the Reds. The purist Giamatti banned Rose for life and then, playing out his own role in this neo–Greek tragedy, died of a heart attack only nine days later.

Rose survives. After serving five months in a federal prison for tax evasion, he left Cincinnati for Boca Raton, Fla., where he operates a restaurant and hosts a radio talk show. He has not yet applied for reinstatement to baseball, and because of either his indomitable spirit or a defective conscience, he has refused to acknowledge any wrongdoing. Rose has never been one to complain, to accept defeat or to admit error. But to the rest of us, he seems that most forlorn of characters, in life as in dreams: a fallen idol.

— RON FIMRITE

Photograph by WALTER IOOSS JR., 1968

7

MARVIN MILLER

HE WAS A '60s RADICAL IN A SHIMMERING BLUE SUIT. HE WAS AN OUTSIDER who dared challenge one of America's most cherished and, to his great consternation, most unwavering institutions: the game of baseball. Viewed through the corrective lens of history, though, Marvin Miller advanced an ideology that wasn't at all radical, even if his wardrobe may have been another story.

Miller held that a ballplayer should not be bound to one club for life. He thought a $1,000 increase in the minimum annual salary over 20 years was grossly insufficient. Is that such extremist thinking? Well, it was in 1966, when Miller began what would be his 17 undefeated years as executive director of the Major League Baseball Players Association.

Miller, more than anyone else in the past 40 years, changed baseball's very structure, and he did so with the logic of someone not hidebound by the mythology and blind patriotism of the game. "I believe this was the first time the players reached out and got an experienced trade unionist," he says. "It wasn't that it was me. It was my background and expertise that were essential." He had come from the United Steelworkers of America, where he had gained vast experience in collective bargaining. When Miller first looked at baseball's standard player's contract, he thought it was "one of the worst labor documents I'd ever seen." It would have to be changed.

Starting with one battered filing cabinet and $5,400 in the association's checking account, Miller piled victory upon victory. "It's not difficult to make major strides," he once said, "in an industry a hundred years behind in labor relations." In 1968 he obtained an increase in the minimum salary from $6,000 a year (it had been $5,000 in '47) to $10,000; over time he assembled for the players what Ray Grebey, the former owners representative, called "the best pension plan in America"; he secured the salary arbitration system in '73; and he held his membership together through a 50-day strike in '81—"the association's finest hour," as he described it in his memoirs.

Miller's agenda was aided mightily when, following the 1969 season, outfielder Curt Flood of the St. Louis Cardinals made his courageous stand in protest of baseball's reserve clause, under which a club was allowed to control a player's services until it decided to release or trade him. Flood refused to accept a trade to Philadelphia after his contract had expired, claiming that the reserve clause constituted a violation of antitrust law. Flood fought his case all the way to the Supreme Court, which ultimately ruled against him. It was, however, a short-lived victory for baseball owners. On Dec. 23, 1975, when arbitrator Peter Seitz ruled that pitchers Andy Messersmith and Dave McNally were free agents after playing the previous season without contracts, the reserve clause was effectively struck down. "The reserve clause was the most abominable thing I'd ever seen," says Miller. "I didn't think it would stand up."

He was better at labor relations than the owners—and he knew it. Baseball's most powerful man was just 5′ 8″, had a withered right arm from a birthing complication and never raised his voice in negotiations. He postured only with deep sighs, a tiny laugh at things unfunny and a sense of righteousness that infuriated the owners. "He is a prisoner of his own ego above all things," wrote former commissioner Bowie Kuhn. *The St. Louis Globe-Democrat* said that he "would do baseball a favor if he disappeared or got lost or found the nearest hole and jumped into it."

He is 77 now, living in his same 32nd-floor apartment on the East Side of Manhattan and available to the players' association whenever it should seek his wisdom. Having established for the players both purpose and freedom, he is the association's George Washington and Abraham Lincoln all in one. "It's rightfully been called the most solid labor organization in the country, and not just in sports," he says. "Considering where we began, I think I'm proudest of that."

Strangely, while the game's labor wars have reached new heights of contentiousness, Miller's own image has seemingly been enhanced over time—from, at worst, that of some activist heaving homemade bombs at baseball to, at best, that of a champion of reason. Gradually he even earned the grudging respect of his adversaries. The past two years, New York Yankee owner George Steinbrenner has invited Miller to be his guest at the team's home opener. —TOM VERDUCCI

Photograph by EVELYN FLORET, 1979

LAKERS
CELTICS

8

LARRY BIRD & MAGIC JOHNSON

FOR TWO PEOPLE SO FIRMLY LINKED TOGETHER—IN THESE PAGES AND throughout NBA eternity—they sure were different. Ebony and Ivory, Left Coast and East Coast, the prince of Hollywood Showtime and the lord of the blue-collar masses. But, to be sure, the best way to study Earvin (Magic) Johnson and Larry Joe Bird is to consider them as a single piece, with their double-dribble entry into the NBA in 1979 coming as a fortunate accident of timing that did nothing less than rescue pro basketball.

The NBA of the '70s was the enclave of the selfish and the satisfied, a place where individual talent flourished at the expense of team play. That's the way the average fan saw it, anyway, and there was more than a little truth in that perception. More to the point, attendance was flagging, advertisers were turned off, TV viewers weren't watching, several owners were talking about selling, and a bone-deep malaise permeated the whole sport. Magic and Bird turned it all around.

Theirs was an irresistible story line, hatched on a court in Salt Lake City on March 26, 1979, in what is still the most-watched NCAA final ever. Individually they were great players, together they became an epic tale, and their greatest combined contribution was bringing the art of unselfishness back to the game. They passed, they battled for loose balls, they lobbied with referees, they pushed themselves and their teammates to the limit. And, best of all, Johnson's Los Angeles Lakers and Bird's Boston Celtics won championships. Suddenly, players who came after them had a blueprint for how to play the game, and just as suddenly, fans had a reason to care about the NBA. Are you a Laker fan or a Celtic fan? Do you favor Magic or Bird? Do you like Magic's California fast break or are you partial to Bird's Massachusetts muscle?

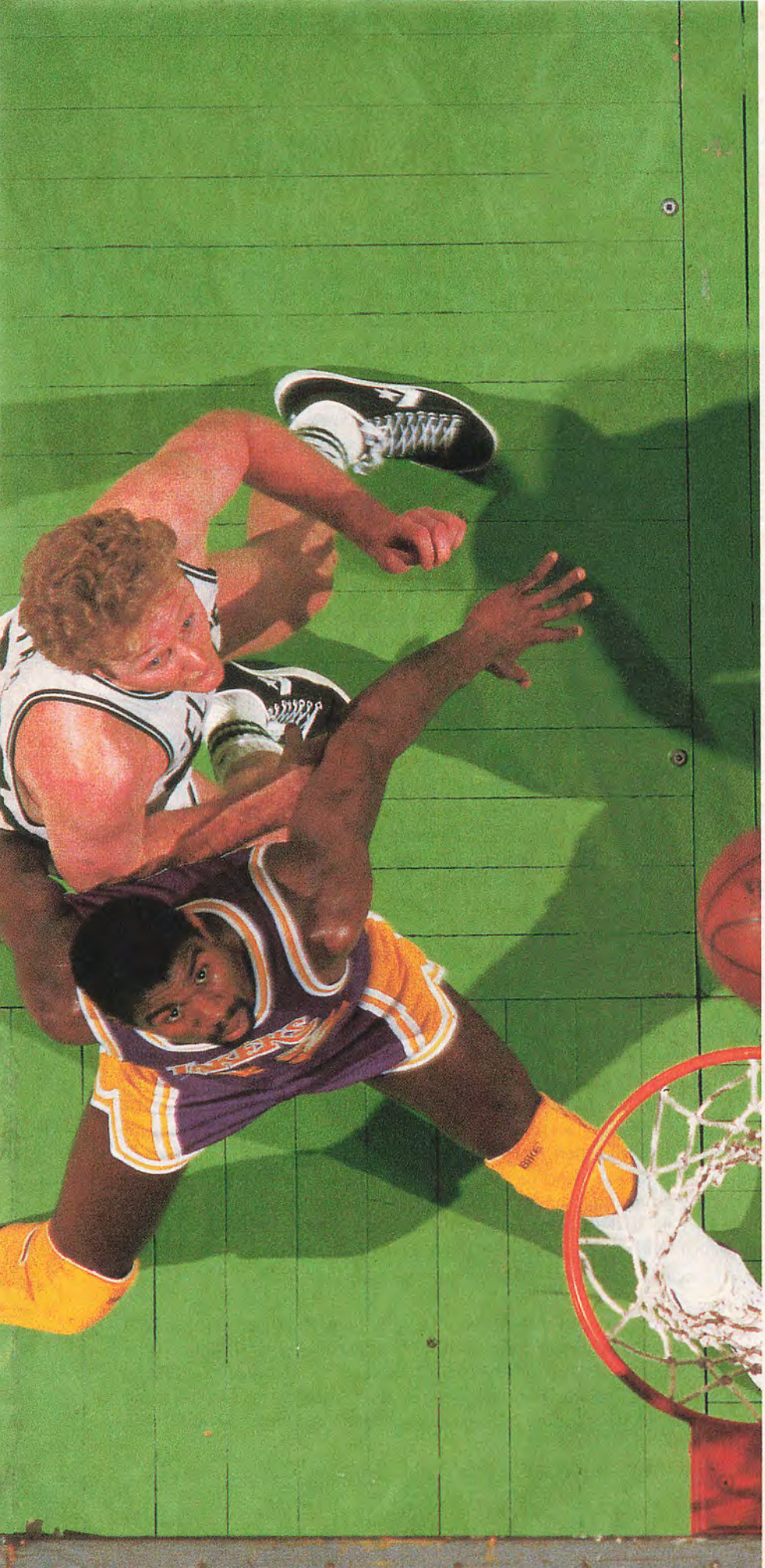
Your answers spoke volumes not only about your ideas on basketball but also about yourself. To say that these two men transcended the game merely states the obvious, for it is impossible to separate the subject of Magic and Bird from the subject of race. The basketball traditionalist, typically an older white man convinced that point guard play began and ended with Bob Cousy, started with a vague mistrust of the flashy Laker point guard. But Magic would finally win him over, demonstrating that you can win with style and smile, play with both substance and a sense of theater. The younger urban fan scoffed at the more labored moves of this palest of the pale Celtics. But Bird would finally win him over, showing that you can win with grit and guile, play with both imagination and a headful of Hoosier fundamentals.

Since the two met only twice a year in the regular season, the average fan never grew tired of their rivalry. Their competitive confluences were always happenings, season checkpoints, whether they occurred late in December or early in April. Altogether they matched up 37 times as pros, including 19 times in the postseason; Magic's Lakers won 22, Bird's Celtics won 15. And when the clock was counting down and the game was on the line, there was no doubt who was going to get the ball: L.A. gave it to Magic, Boston gave it to Bird.

The debate over who was the better player raged among media and fans (and, more quietly, among other NBA players). Magic broke from the blocks first. He led his Michigan State team to a 75–64 victory over Bird's Indiana State ragamuffins in their first memorable meeting. Though Bird beat him out for NBA Rookie of the Year in 1980, it was Johnson who picked up a championship trophy in his first pro season. And it was after he moved from point guard to center (replacing an injured Kareem Abdul-Jabbar) in the sixth and decisive game of the 1980 Finals against the Philadelphia 76ers that Magic's stunning versatility became obvious. But Bird won it all the next year, and their unspoken game of "anything you can do I can do better" became the NBA's No. 1 topic.

For the record, this vote for best player at first went to Bird, whose all-around game seemed superior, but later to Magic, whose physical condition held up longer and who still had the Lakers playing for the championship in 1991, by which time Bird's fortunes had fallen and the Celtics' with them. But ultimately their individual duel didn't matter. Magic's people respected Bird, and Bird's people respected Magic. Competitive NBA tandems had preceded them, of course—Bill

Photograph by AL TIELEMANS/DUOMO, 1993



8 • Bird & Magic

Russell had Wilt Chamberlain, Oscar Robertson had Jerry West—but none had the combined resonance of Magic and Bird: sociological phenomenons, championship rivals, league saviors.

It wasn't until late in their careers that the principals at last seemed to get a sense of each other and the collective contribution they had made to the game. Oh, Magic, the chamber of commerce superstar, would usually say the right things about Larry, but they always rang a little hollow; and Bird, the reticent one, would say almost nothing at all about Johnson. Through most of the '80s their teams were too competitive, their pride too much at stake, their preeminence among their peers too much of an issue to allow them to toss one another crosscourt bouquets. But as they grew older and looked back on all they had achieved, they developed a sincere fondness for each other. After Magic announced in November 1991 that he had contracted HIV, Bird broke down and wept. A piece of himself was gone when Magic hung it up, and, indeed, Bird, plagued by back problems, announced his retirement just nine months later.

That was shortly after the two had stepped onto the court in Barcelona in the summer of '92 as coleaders of the first U.S. Olympic team to include professional players, the symbolic denouement of their careers. Neither the 35-year-old Celtic nor the 33-year-old Laker was the sublime talent he had once been, but that wasn't the point. Without the dual influence of Bird and Magic, there might not have *been* a Dream Team. Or, for that matter, an NBA as we know it today. —Jack McCallum

Photograph by
Manny Millan, 1985

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9 ARNOLD PALMER

ALL ARNOLD DANIEL PALMER DID WAS SAVE GOLF. ALL HE DID WAS BRING golf to the truck drivers and the mailmen and the women trying to make three no-trump in their neighborhood bridge groups. Basically he took a game that was a little too prissy, a little too clubby, a little too saturated with Ivy League men trying not to soil their cardigans, and breathed sweet life into it.

There had been great players before, of course. Ben Hogan in particular had been a great one, but Hogan was about as lovable as a border guard, an automaton who walked down the middle of the fairway without looking left or right. Arnie never did that. You kidding? Arnie was rarely *in* a fairway. Golf got lucky with Palmer. Just when live TV started poking around golf, this handsome, broad-shouldered young piano mover of a man came along. Palmer walked fast, let his hair get mussed and bummed cigarette lights from the gallery. This was *definitely* not Hogan. Hogan had a good tailor. Palmer's shirttail wouldn't stay tucked. Small wonder. Every time Arnie swung, you thought he was going to fall off the tee box. His swing was not at all a swing, but more a mad slash, like a furious pull of the cord while trying to start a stubborn lawn mower.

In 1958, when CBS was televising its third Masters, Palmer won. He also won CBS's fifth and seventh and ninth Masters. Suddenly golf was something women peeked at from under their hair dryers and men from over their cold Falstaffs. Here was a guy about as Ivy League as bratwurst, the son of a pro who ran a nine-hole golf club in rural Pennsylvania. He was earthy and sexy and tan, and best of all, emotion leaked out of him from every pore. When Palmer came from seven shots back in the final round to win the 1960 U.S. Open at Cherry Hills in Denver, it was as passionate a victory as golf had ever enjoyed. He *drove* the par-4 1st hole, birdied six of the first seven and, after sinking the final putt on 18, leaned back on one spike, smiled gloriously and flung his visor into the Colorado air. Nobody had ever seen Hogan do *that.*

What you had here was love. Sam Sixpack loved Arnie because Arnie seemed to want to win as much as he did and yet seemed to have no better tools with which to do it than he did. Palmer muscled every shot with a low, hard hook that often wound up behind a juniper bush. He would carry eight putters with him to the course and agonize over which might betray him that day. But he had strength and will. The strength he would use to smash out of the weeds and onto the green. The will he would use to sink the impossible *got-to* putt. "If I ever had an eight-foot putt, and everything I owned depended upon it," golfing legend Bobby Jones once said, "I'd want Arnold Palmer to take it for me." It was the passion exhibited on his face that brought the fans out, the grins and the grimaces. No golfer in history has ever had the devotees that became Arnie's Army; its soldiers were so devoted that it was not unusual for one to let himself be hit by a Palmer missile to keep it from bounding over the green and into trouble.

But Palmer's greatness didn't last. Although he ranks fourth on the PGA Tour list for most career wins, with 60, he won all seven of his majors and both of his PGA Player of the Year awards in just seven seasons (1958–64). His charisma nonetheless has endured. Tour players today respect Palmer, the one they call the King, more than any other man. He was golf's first pro to make a million, the first to have his own logo and the last still signing autographs when everybody else had long since escaped to courtesy cars for rides back to the Hilton.

And so it was that when the 64-year-old Arnie came to the 18th green at this year's U.S. Open in Oakmont, Pa., down the road from the little nine-hole course he grew up on, the rolling roar made by the crowd shook the water glasses in the players' scoring trailer 100 feet away. This would be Palmer's last Open, and nobody wanted to miss it—not the fans jammed in the stands, not the television cameras in the blimp poised overhead, not the row upon row of reporters who had run out of their air-conditioned press tent to watch. And at the height of the tumultuous ovation, as tears came to Palmer's eyes, a young tour pro named Rocco Mediate hugged him close and whispered in his ear what golf already knew but what Palmer may never have heard: "You made all this possible."

— RICK REILLY

Photograph by WALTER IOOSS JR., 1964

10

MARK MCCORMACK

HE WAS A YOUNG LAWYER FROM CLEVELAND WITH A PASSION FOR GOLF, A brilliant, creative mind and a workaholic nature. In 1960 he signed his first client, Arnold Palmer, and from that sturdy platform Mark H. McCormack launched a business that would become a billion-dollar industry and forever change the landscape of professional sports.

Virtually everything being done today in the management and corporate sponsorship of athletic events, in merchandise licensing and in made-for-TV sports started with McCormack. He was the first big-time sports agent. He founded his company, the International Management Group, on the simple premise that to have their names associated with great athletes, corporations would pay a lot of money. Not hundreds of dollars, which was the going rate for personal appearances when McCormack got into the game, but tens of thousands, then hundreds of thousands and finally the millions that the top athletes earn in endorsements today. McCormack convinced the business world that sports was an ideal marketing vehicle—high in visibility, positive in image and international in scope.

Timing, of course, is everything, and a few things happened in the early '60s that helped create the sports boom that McCormack has so deftly exploited. Television began to bring sports stars into people's living rooms. At the same time, commercial jet travel was shrinking the world. Athletes could travel longer distances to make appearances and play in more events than ever before.

Long before there was much talk of a global economy, McCormack was a global thinker. (Today IMG has 64 offices in 25 countries, amassing revenue of $1 billion annually.) IMG's strategy was to try to sign the best athlete in each country, then use that athlete to open corporate doors in his or her homeland. Gary Player, a South African, and Tony Jacklin, an Englishman, joined McCormack's stable of golfers. Scottish race driver Jackie Stewart became an IMG client, as did French skier Jean-Claude Killy and Swedish tennis player Bjorn Borg.

McCormack tapped into the events his athletes played in. Wimbledon became an IMG client in 1968, allowing McCormack to handle its TV and video rights and licensing deals. He created merchandising logos for golf's U.S. and British opens, then licensed them around the world. The Ryder Cup; tennis's Italian, Australian and U.S. opens; and the European PGA Tour all allowed themselves to be embraced by IMG's golden tentacles. Explaining IMG's expansion into event management, McCormack once said, "Bjorn Borg can break a leg. Wimbledon cannot."

It was also IMG that invented the lucrative, if increasingly ludicrous, phenomenon of made-for-TV sports events, which McCormack could sell by delivering IMG's marquee-caliber athletes as paid participants. The Skins Game and its various spinoffs were IMG creations, as were *The Killy Challenge*, the *Battle of the Network Stars*, and *American Gladiators*. Little was sacred in McCormack's efforts to expand revenues for IMG and its clients. Sport was the fatted calf and IMG a rendering plant. It was IMG that came up with the idea of stretching the Olympics over 17 days and three weekends—which translated into bigger TV audiences and rights fees. IMG insisted on ever-escalating appearance fees for its golf and tennis heavyweights like Nick Faldo, Greg Norman, Bernhard Langer, Ivan Lendl, Chris Evert and Martina Navratilova, fees that sometimes exceeded the prize money for winning a tournament.

Some IMG athletes, though, have fallen victim to burnout. Jennifer Capriati was a multimillionaire before she was 15, but she had made a mess of her life before she turned 18. Golfer Bill Rogers lost his love of the game and his competitive fire by chasing the highest bidders all over the globe at IMG's behest. In recent years both Greg Norman and Curtis Strange, while enriching themselves off the IMG chuck wagon, suffered prolonged slumps while still in their primes.

McCormack's response? His job is to provide his clients with opportunities to cash in on their fame. All they have to do is say no. Palmer, McCormack's original client, is worth hundreds of millions of dollars and is still beloved the world over. And McCormack, alternately charming and manipulative, has—for better or worse, for richer and still richer—presided over a golden age of sport, from which there is no turning back.

— E.M. SWIFT

Photograph by JEAN GUICHARD/GAMMA LIAISON, 1987

11

CARL LEWIS

THE IMPERATIVE OF CARL LEWIS'S CHOSEN RACE, THE 100-METER DASH, IS simply the imperative of his life. A tall, long-levered man, Lewis must always take a few steps to get those knees up, those arms driving, those hands slicing. He must always reach full speed behind faster starters. And so he must always know that two things will happen over the last 30 meters: His opposition will strain and tighten. And he will not.

This is not a situation for a pinched, panicky soul. This takes obdurate faith in a stillness of mind that allows every muscle except those that throw him forward to stay as loose as lubrication. This takes the absolute dismissal of the grunting sprinters to either side. No issues of manhood are being settled in Lewis's lane. The more purely he runs his race, the more solitary he becomes. The more solitary he becomes, the longer he will last, while others press and flail and fall behind. Only at the finish, having lasted, is he revealed.

Lewis is the most enduring champion in track and field history, not only in the sprint but also in the long jump. He has won eight Olympic gold medals in three Summer Games: two 100s, a 200, two 4 × 100 relays and three long jumps. He has won eight gold medals in world championships. Six times over nine years, Lewis anchored U.S. 4 × 100-meter teams to world records.

He made his first Olympic team at 18, in 1980, and was kept from competing in Moscow by the U.S. boycott. Two summers from now, at 34, he will most likely make the 1996 U.S. team, since he is jumping well after back rehab. In Atlanta, world-record holder Mike Powell notwithstanding, Lewis will have a chance to become a four-time champion in that most jarringly destructive event, the long jump.

Like the 100, the jump demands a man who attends to his own rhythms. When Lewis began to master his technique in 1981, Bob Beamon's world record of 29′ 2½″, set in 1968 at Mexico City's 7,525-foot altitude, was thought unearthly, unapproachable. Beamon himself never again came within a foot and three inches of it. Lewis made Beamon seem a one-jump pony. He went undefeated for a decade, more than 65 straight long-jump competitions. Fifty times he surpassed 28 feet, reaching a best of 29′ 1¼″. He has often refused to jump at altitude, wanting no asterisk to distort his legacy. When Powell at last broke Beamon's mark by two inches in 1991, he was pressed to do it by Lewis, who had just jumped a wind-assisted 29′ 2¾″.

Since Lewis is so serenely unthreatened by competitors, he is a fine teammate. He has drawn to his Santa Monica Track Club such sprinters as Leroy Burrell (who has twice relieved him of the 100-meter world record) and Olympic 200-meter champions Joe DeLoach and Mike Marsh. This allowed Santa Monica not only to break three relay records but also to present such a unified front in negotiations with meet promoters as to shift the balance of power in newly professional track and field.

Perhaps only a man of Lewis's self-possession could have twice absorbed stunning defeats by Ben Johnson, in the 1987 world championships and the 1988 Olympic 100. Perhaps only such a man could have felt in his every bone that Johnson was stoked on steroids yet could have kept silent because he had no proof. And when Johnson's drug test supplied the proof, Lewis refrained from expressing anything other than regretful concern for his disgraced rival.

In his response to every loss and to the virus that prevented him from defending his 100-meter title at the '92 Olympics in Barcelona, Lewis has been the soul of grace. Yet it is possible to stand in awe of his unassailable calm and of the beauty and number and drama of his performances and still not feel we quite know the man. A few years ago, discussing the problems of track and field in the U.S., former mile record-holder John Walker of New Zealand said, "Your greatest athlete is a guy nobody can relate to." Lewis's liberating cool liberates *him*, not necessarily us. We might understand him best as forged by the 100, holding on to his solitude until the pack falls away.

If so, then Lewis's most instructive success, in this age of deranging or strength-sapping public attentions, may be that he goes on exactly as he always has, on his own terms, uncatchable.

— KENNY MOORE

Photograph by ROBERT MCELROY/WOODFIN CAMP & ASSOCIATES, 1988

SANTA MONICA
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12 WAYNE GRETZKY

HE CAME INTO THE LEAGUE AS AN OUTSIDER, A SKINNY TEENAGER WITH A weird number on his back, who had been playing in the upstart—and disdained—World Hockey Association. Most observers believed the kid would get his comeuppance in the rough-and-tumble NHL. Not big enough. Not strong enough. Not tough enough. It was a chip that Wayne Gretzky would wear on his shoulder long after others had forgotten it, so that even now, with four Stanley Cup rings and 61 NHL scoring records, he plays as if he has something to prove.

"I never had the God-given talent of Wayne," Phil Esposito, the man whose single-season scoring records Gretzky obliterated, once said. "The only guy who had that was Bobby Orr. . . . But it takes guts to recognize that you have that talent and dedicate yourself to it."

Number 99 had guts, all right, and single-minded dedication. Even as a teenager, he carried himself with the poise of a man whose eyes were on the brass ring of greatness. Gretzky's physical tools were seemingly ordinary. He was lean, almost gangly at 6 feet, 170 pounds, and he used to finish last in the Edmonton Oiler strength tests. His speed was better than average but not great. His shot? Same story. With a puck on his stick, though, no one was ever better. And his genius for the game . . . well, it was as if he could *think* his way past defenders.

He has been so good for so long—Gretzky won his 10th NHL scoring title this past season and surpassed Gordie Howe's record for goals in a career—that it's easy to forget how otherworldly the Great One was in his prime. That was during a six-year stretch between 1981 and '87, when Gretzky, aged 20 to 26, averaged 73 goals and 130 assists a season. No one else in the history of the NHL has scored 200 points in a year, and Gretzky *averaged* better than that over a six-year span. In each of those mind-boggling seasons he won the scoring title—by, on average, 73 points. In 1981–82 he had 92 goals in 80 games (scoring on 24.9% of his shots); in 1985–86 he had 163 assists and 215 points. Both are single-season records that may never be broken.

Had Gretzky been playing in a media center like New York then, who knows where the NHL would be today? Emanating from wintry, wheaty Edmonton, Gretzky's feats only reinforced hockey's image as a cold-weather regional game. Hockey had no national television contract in the U.S. But Gretzky's style of play was changing hockey's image as a goon sport as night after night he put on a show of offensive creativity worthy of the highlight tapes. "Hockey would have survived the last three years without him," Orr said in 1982. "Hockey will always *survive*. But if Wayne is influencing the hundreds of thousands, the *millions* of kids I think he is—well, put it this way: Thank god he's around."

Gretzky's signature moves, once his alone, are now commonly practiced by the top centers in the game. He has always liked to set up behind the goal in the offensive zone, using it like a pick, from which point he can receive and dish off passes. He likes to carry the puck over the blue line at full speed, then spin on a dime toward the boards. If the defensemen sag back, Gretzky moves in and shoots. If a defenseman stops and pursues him, Gretzky passes off to a breaking winger, suddenly in the clear. "There's such a sense of freedom about him," Hall of Fame goalie Ken Dryden once marveled. "There's almost a will-o'-the-wisp quality to the way he skates."

The city of Edmonton mourned when, for financial reasons, Gretzky was traded to the Los Angeles Kings in 1988. Gretzky's mandate in L.A. was twofold: to sell hockey to Southern California and to bring the hapless Kings the Stanley Cup. He had lost a half step by then, and injuries started to nag him for the first time in his career. Still, he had the star quality that Californians love and the on-ice creativity to stay among the game's offensive elite. And he was as intensely dedicated as ever. He led the Kings to the Stanley Cup finals in 1993, by which time the NHL had added two new and wildly successful expansion franchises in California. Hockey's acceptance in the Sun Belt, long held to be a pipe dream, is directly attributed to Gretzky.

Well-spoken and unfailingly polite, always respectful of the men whose records he eclipsed, Gretzky has been a treasure to his often-troubled sport. When he leaves it, he'll be the man to whom all others are compared.

— E.M. SWIFT

Photograph by DAVID GUILBURT/ONYX, 1994

13

PETE ROZELLE

PETE ROZELLE HAD IT ALL FIGURED OUT. FOR 29 YEARS HE CHECKED HIS ego at his office door, rolled up his sleeves and put in 11-hour days trying to cajole competitive owners and competitive players into getting along with each other. At first, in the '60s, Rozelle's smooth and evenhanded style worked, and the commissioner of the National Football League saw his game flourish mightily. But by the time he resigned, in the late '80s, one man's will and fair-mindedness could no longer prevail.

Today if a sports commissioner were to try to suspend a star player because he suspected the player of gambling, he would probably face months of litigation and a seven-figure bill from the league lawyers. In 1963, when the 37-year-old Rozelle decided to discipline Green Bay Packer back Paul Hornung for betting on his own team's games, he summoned Packer coach Vince Lombardi to New York and let Lombardi read the evidence file. Rozelle then announced to the coach that he was suspending Hornung for a year. With that the two men went out for a Scotch.

Today if a sports commissioner were to decide to realign his league, he would face interminable infighting and years of politicking. Twenty-four years ago, when the old NFL, newly merged with the AFL, had to realign, no one could agree on the logical NFC divisions; so Rozelle wrote all the possible realignment structures on pieces of paper, placed them in a flower vase and had his secretary, Thelma Elkjer, pick one out. She picked the current three-division setup.

In 1960, when Alvin Ray Rozelle was elected NFL commissioner on the 23rd ballot, he instantly understood, being a former public relations man, that he was not the story. Pro football was the story, and Rozelle had a vision of what he wanted his sport to be. He would push and negotiate and persuade until he achieved it. His vision: closely contested games played in full stadiums *and all over national television*.

When Rozelle began his term, baseball ruled American sports culture. Pro football was just building a little head of steam, still glowing from its most dramatic nationally televised championship, the 1958 title game, in which the Baltimore Colts beat the New York Giants in sudden-death overtime. Rozelle felt there were two keys to the future of sports in America: parity and TV. At the time, each NFL team made its own television deal: Pittsburgh and Baltimore were on NBC, Cleveland was syndicated on a private network, and other teams fended for themselves on CBS. "By the end of 1960," Rozelle recalls, "we talked to the owners of the big-city teams—in Los Angeles, Chicago and New York—and got them to agree to the concept of a network package for all our teams. Then we went to Congress and obtained a bill allowing us to sell club rights collectively to a single network. That set the stage for our 1962 contract." The NFL's small-market teams had received about $150,000 apiece from TV in 1961, compared with $500,000 for big-market teams; that figure jumped (and fell) to around $330,000 apiece for all teams from CBS in 1962 and vaulted to more than $1 million per team with the second CBS deal, in 1964.

The most powerful owners at the time, such as Wellington Mara of the Giants and George Halas of the Chicago Bears, were big believers in the common good, so getting the richer clubs to split the TV deal equally with small-market teams was not terribly difficult for Rozelle. Thus the Packers, in America's 65th-largest TV market, would almost certainly be dead today had they not begun to receive that equal slice of TV revenue. While it might be argued that it was those team-spirited owners of a generation ago, rather than their commissioner, who secured the financial fortunes of the NFL, it is still true that the dominant sport in this country became dominant under Rozelle's visionary watch.

His legacy? The 1986 Super Bowl was the most-watched TV broadcast of all time, with 127 million people seeing at least part of it. In '87 every team in the AFC East was tied 5–5 entering Week 11 of the season. In '88 stadium attendance in Week 7 (934,211) was the highest of any weekend in NFL history. In '90, not long after Rozelle's departure, the league negotiated TV contracts that would pay each club an average of $32.5 million over four years. Pete Rozelle had been able to retire in peace. His league was the giant of them all. —PETER KING

Photograph by LANE STEWART, 1979

14

MARTINA NAVRATILOVA

MARTINA NAVRATILOVA'S CAREER TURNED ON A MOMENT OF TRUTH. Confronted with the accusation that she had an unorthodox sexual preference—and that's what it still is in the mainstream world of sport, an accusation—she decided to tell an inquiring reporter the truth.

Scores of athletes are gay, but among those who are active stars, very few have chosen not to deny it. Yet together with Navratilova's coming out, a curious thing happened. As she dealt publicly with her private life, she was learning to grapple with some of the private issues that affected the public Martina, the woman who played tennis for a living. She decided that it indeed mattered what she ate, how she trained, how she managed the mental demons that had kept her from being the professional she might be. There bloomed within her a new security and sass and an ease with herself. (Male sportswriter: "Martina, are you still a lesbian?" Navratilova: "Are you still the alternative?") As she shored up her public and private selves, each reinforced the other.

No woman tennis pro has won as many matches. None has won as many tournaments. Over one masterful 14-month stretch in the mid-'80s she won six straight Grand Slam titles, to tie the record set by Margaret Court. To most players on the tour, doubles is an afterthought, but here was a peerless singles champion who took doubles seriously. Navratilova never put together a singles Grand Slam in one calendar year, but she did, with Pam Shriver in 1984, win a doubles Slam. And she won nine Wimbledon singles titles, more than anyone of either gender, nearly taking a 10th in her London valedictory this past summer.

Moments after earning that record ninth silver plate in 1990, she ran unselfconsciously into the stands of the very proper All-England Club to fix her girlfriend with a hug. Yet corporate America still preferred to choose its pitchwomen from the ranks of the less controversial. Chris Evert, the safe baseliner who was both Navratilova's great prod and counterpoint, pitched frozen food, rental cars and Rolex watches. Later, before any had left their teens, Monica Seles peddled hair-care products and jeans, Steffi Graf sold milk and cars, Jennifer Capriati flogged Oil of Olay. Martina? She was considered worthy of deals for little more than shoes and socks.

Yet without any corporate tune callers, Navratilova was free to promote her own beliefs, from animal rights to environmental awareness, and to follow in the footsteps of her sports heroes, so many of whom championed causes beyond the arena and suffered for doing so: Muhammad Ali, Billie Jean King, Jackie Robinson, John Carlos. In going from Communist Czechoslovakia, her native country, to the forefront of the U.S. gay-rights movement, she simply redirected her indignation. She once said, "I've always had this outrage against being told how to live, what to say, how to act, what to do, when to do it."

And how to play. Like so much else about her, Navratilova's aggressive style seemed to have been part of her genetic core. The slow clay of her homeland didn't figure to produce a female serve-and-volleyer. Yet even at age eight, as she learned the game at a club on the outskirts of Prague, some tropism drew her to the net.

When she left Czechoslovakia for good, in 1975 at the age of 18, she did so with a vengeance, partaking of all manner of Western goods. At one point she would own seven cars. With her passion for dogs and the Dallas Cowboys, and her support of the restoration of the Statue of Liberty, it's hard to think of a native-born athlete more publicly American than she. Within months of her defection, another American passion, fast food, had inflated her to 167 pounds, but she was psychologically doughy too, and opponents knew it. "She's always going to have the storm; she's always going to underassess her opponent and underassess her own ability to handle it when the storm hits," said tennis couturier Ted Tinling, the sage of the women's game. "She goes from arrogance to panic, with nothing in between."

But with maturity came the ability to master the crisis. She dropped 22 pounds through diet and exercise, an example that showed others on the tour that it was O.K. for women athletes to have muscles. She won her first Wimbledon in 1978, at 21, and another the following summer. In

Photograph by JUNE HARRISON, 1976

1981, nine days before coming out, she became a U.S. citizen. More dedicated than ever to fitness, nutrition and mental preparation, she soon lived down her reputation for choking in key matches simply by resolving to hit more freely on the big points. She found a happy midpoint between arrogance and panic.

There's no better way to plot the arc of her ascendancy than to study her record against Evert, whose narrow range of emotion set off the breadth of Navratilova's. Martina lost to Chrissie 21 of the first 25 times they played. When the series ended, Navratilova led 43–37. "Martina takes on other people's characteristics," Evert said early in 1981. "I don't know what that quality is. It's not being yourself, really. Maybe it's a searching." Soon thereafter, no longer stateless and no longer veiling from the world who she really was, Navratilova would finish the searching. She would be resolutely herself.

Through it all she always made plain exactly what she wanted. At various times this included french fries, luxury goods, a country to call her own, another Wimbledon, our affection.

That last thing was her constant craving. But she wanted our love on her terms. And when she got it so universally and unconditionally toward the end of her career, she was somewhat taken aback. She said, "When I get all these accolades for being true to myself, I say, 'Who else would I be?' I can't be Chris Evert."

In Czech, Navratilova means "she who returns." And come back she did, again and again, to who she was and what she needed. To play an honest game. To live an honest life. Who anymore does both?

— ALEXANDER WOLFF

Photograph by
MANNY MILLAN, 1986

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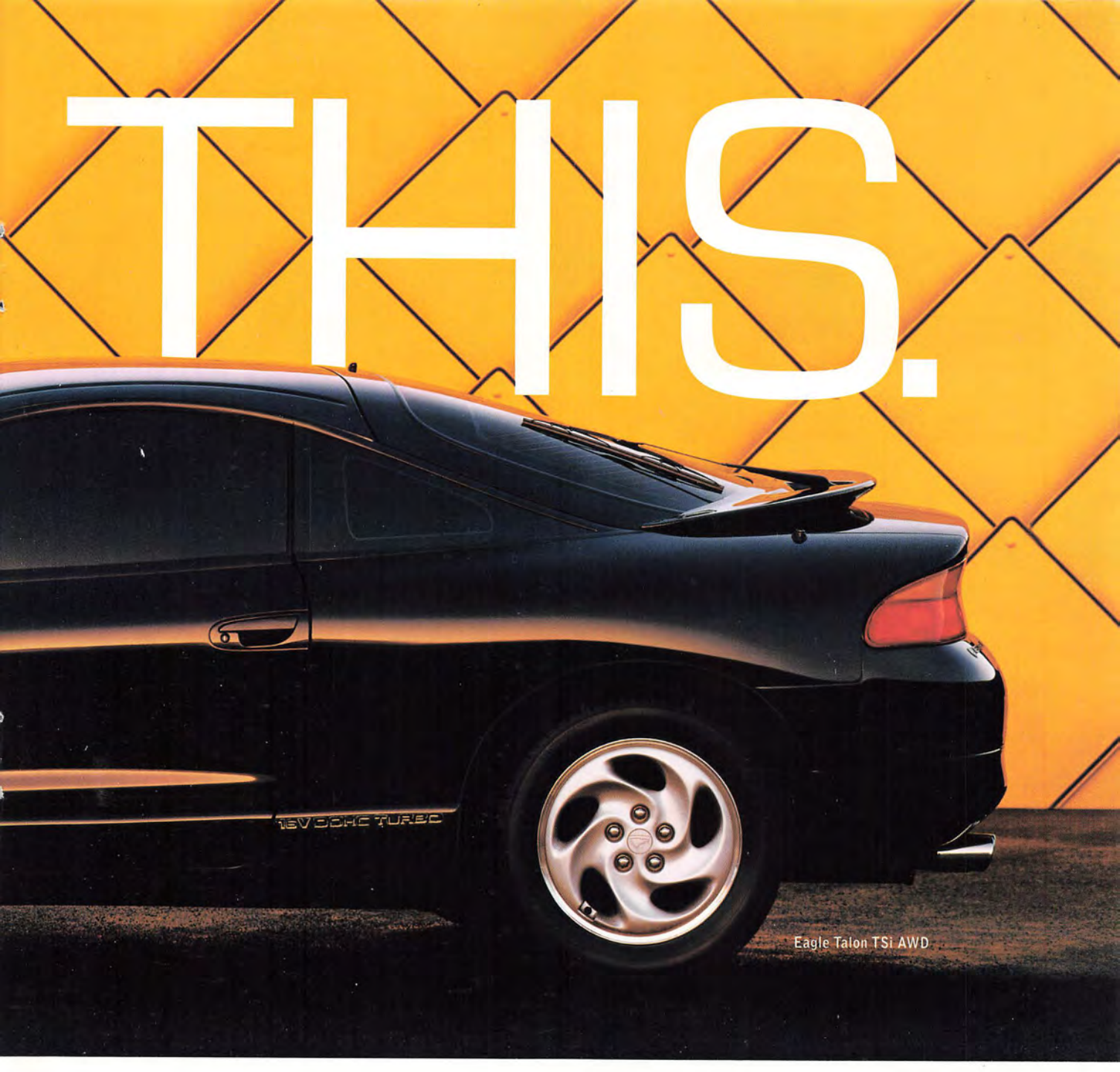

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7. Both powerplants—the 210 horsepower, intercooled turbo of TSi and TSi AWD as well as ESi's 140 horsepower engine—feature dual overhead cams and 4 valves per cylinder for smooth off-the-line performance (*Car and Driver* clocked the TSi AWD turbo at 0-60 mph in just 6.6 seconds**).
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10. Front and rear stabilizer bars (front only on ESi) and variable damping gas-charged shock absorbers improve handling without sacrificing riding comfort for your passengers.
11. The performance steering wheel and pistol-grip shifter slip naturally into your hand; full analog gauges inform you at a glance; controls are designed and placed right where you need them.
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18. Every new 1995 Eagle Talon comes with our Customer One Care, including 3-year/36,000-mile bumper-to-bumper vehicle protection and 24-hour roadside assistance.††

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15
HENRY AARON

HE SEEMED ALWAYS TO BE THE LONELIEST OF MEN, AND NEVER MORE SO than on the occasion of his greatest triumph. Henry Aaron had been such an unpretentious and workmanlike star that he caught the baseball world by surprise when it became obvious in the early 1970s that he would soon surpass Babe Ruth as the game's most prolific home run hitter. By the end of the '73 season, in fact, he was only one homer shy of the Babe's career record of 714. How could this have happened? Where did all those dingers come from? Aaron had never hit 50 or more in a season, as Ruth had four times. Besides, Ruth was the Sultan of Swat, the most colorful and dramatic player in baseball history. Consistency was Aaron's game, not theatricality, and in his own quiet way he had been pecking away with 30 or 40 homers a season for 20 years. Now—at last, and yet suddenly—Hank Aaron stood poised on the brink of immortality.

The brink seemed to Aaron more like a frightening precipice. He had never received a particle of the adulation lavished on such contemporaries as Willie Mays, Mickey Mantle and Roberto Clemente. The others had a glamour sorely missing in Aaron's placid makeup. Hank did his job every day, and that's exactly the way he wanted it. Now he found himself standing in the white-hot glare of the media spotlight. He was about to beat the Babe, for god's sake! But Aaron embraced one aspect of his record chase: As a black man from Mobile, Ala., and as one of the pioneers who helped break down the game's color barrier in the '50s, he felt a surge of racial pride at the history-making element of his impending accomplishment. In his years in Atlanta he had sharpened an already keen social conscience. Beating the Babe, he knew, would be a statement.

But Aaron didn't much care for the rest of this home run circus—the invasion of his cherished privacy, the daily interruptions of his work schedule, the inevitable harassment of his family and friends. And there was something else, something he didn't fully acknowledge in public until years later. As he approached the record, Aaron became the target of a virulent hate-mail campaign. By what right, the racists wanted to know, did he, a black man, dare to supplant the beloved Babe? Some letters suggested that he would not live long enough to succeed. Police were alerted, bodyguards were hired. Aaron even advised his Atlanta teammates to keep clear of him in the dugout lest some demented potential assassin take aim from the stands. What was to have been his finest hour had become a monstrous ordeal.

But Aaron beat the Babe anyway. In his first swing of the bat in the 1974 season, he homered off the Reds' Jack Billingham in Cincinnati to tie the record. And then, four days later, on a rainy Monday night in Atlanta, he lifted a fastball thrown by the Los Angeles Dodgers' Al Downing over the leftfield fence for number 715. Aaron circled the bases in the unwanted company of two young fans who had rushed onto the field to applaud him. Aaron eyed them warily. At home plate Hank was joined by his father, Herbert, and his mother, Estella. Georgia governor Jimmy Carter was also there to congratulate him. An American flag had been painted on the grass in centerfield. Bands were playing, the crowd was cheering. Hammerin' Hank had done it! Only to him did it seem a hollow victory.

Aaron would complete his 23-year career where he started it, in Milwaukee. He played two more years there, with the Brewers, finishing with 755 home runs and a major-league-record 2,297 runs batted in. He had led the National League in homers and runs batted in four times, won two batting championships and, in 1957, been the league's Most Valuable Player; but he didn't receive the recognition that was his due until the very end, when it could scarcely be savored.

In his 1991 book, *I Had a Hammer*, Aaron unleashed much of the anger and disappointment he had harbored for nearly 20 years, quoting extensively from the thousands of "Dear Nigger" letters he received during his ordeal. It is a sad irony that his status as an American hero has been elevated by the revelation of the indignities he endured. Meanwhile Aaron, at 60, presses on. As a Brave executive since his retirement from competition, in 1976, he has campaigned tirelessly to persuade the baseball powers to hire more African-Americans in front-office positions. In his still quietly efficient way, Aaron seems to be his own best argument. — RON FIMRITE

Photograph by JOHN ZIMMERMAN, 1957

Braves
5

16

JOHN WOODEN

IS THERE ANY OTHER SPORTS FIGURE WHO SITS ON THE 20TH CENTURY THE way John Wooden does? The far edge of the shadow of his life reaches to 1910, when he was born on an archetypal Indiana farm: three-holer outhouse out back; iron basketball hoop, forged by his father, mounted on the barn. As we regard him today with the millennium in sight, Wooden, long since retired but still living near Los Angeles, is basketball's whiskered ombudsman. He's the man who clucks at fundamentals gone to seed and college coaches gone show biz. He recounts stubbornly the simple prescriptions for success that worked for him then and, goodness gracious sakes alive, could work for you now. And he watches his successors as basketball coach at UCLA, the school he led to seven straight NCAA championships, flatter him with their chronic failure to win even one.

So much has grown in the cool shade of that life. A three-time All-America guard at Purdue, Wooden was named to the Basketball Hall of Fame in 1960. UCLA won no NCAA titles during his first 15 seasons as its coach, but in his last dozen years he won 10 championships, and for that he was voted into the Hall of Fame again in 1972—the only person to be enshrined twice.

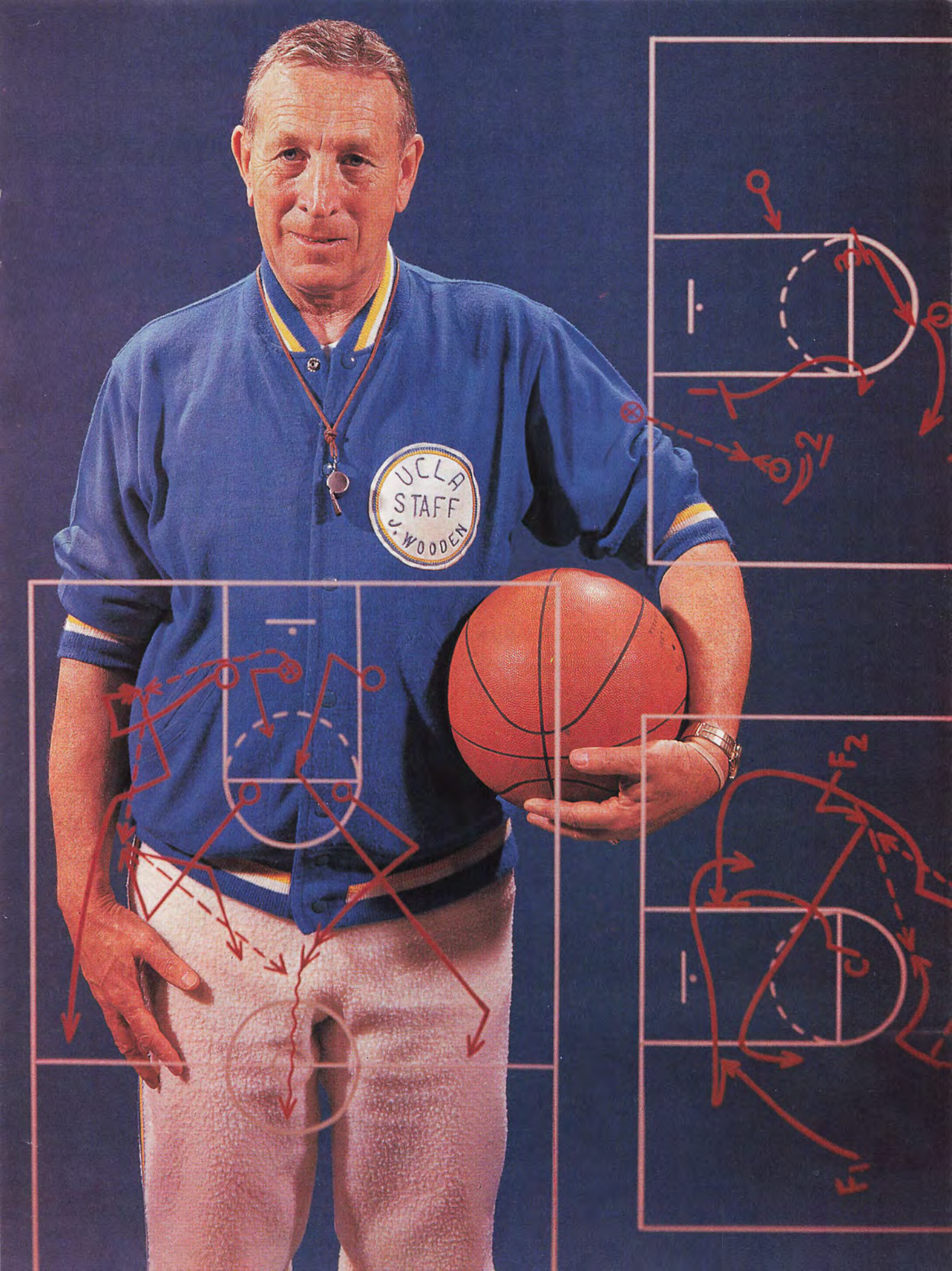
Wooden won his first championship in 1964 with an undersized, full-court-pressing team. A year later Pauley Pavilion opened on campus, and the coach had made sure the university had built him no fancy Dan arena but a classroom in which the bleachers could be rolled back and he could recreate the atmosphere of the one-room schoolhouse in which he grew up. Wooden taught by using the "whole-part" method, breaking the game down to its elements—"just like parsing a sentence," he would say, sounding like the English teacher he had indeed once been. He applied the four basic laws of learning: explanation, demonstration, correction and repetition. And he developed a pedagogy resting on the notion that basketball is a game of threes: forward, center, guard; shoot, drive, pass; ball, you, man; conditioning, skill, teamwork.

As a coach who shunned recruiting, put relatively little stock in the scouting of opponents and refused to equate success with winning, Wooden figured to have become a great failure rather than college sports' preeminent winner of all time. An article of faith among coaches holds that one must be intolerant of mistakes, but here, too, Wooden was a contrarian. He considered errors to be precious opportunities for teaching—preferably in practice, of course. And the games were exams. "Wooden isn't the game coach everybody thinks he is," said Jack Hirsch, who played on that first title team. "He doesn't have to be. He's so good during the week, he sits back, relaxes and has fun watching the game." Wooden had a saying for that phenomenon, as he did for most things in life. In this case the quote is from Cervantes: "The journey's better than the end." Somehow Wooden's impossibly corny, middle-American way of imparting these larger truths actually got through to the rebellious baby boomers in his charge. Perhaps Wooden had taken conventional wisdom and stripped it down so starkly that it struck players like Bill Walton and Lew Alcindor and Keith Wilkes as revolutionary in some refreshing way.

Wooden was a wizard not a saint. Uneasy with the world beyond his gym, he let a renegade booster sink fingers into the UCLA program and compromise its integrity. But those corrupting influences never broke the seal of the capsule that encased Bruin basketball for those hours each week that Wooden spent alone with his players. Although he made possible the cult of the coach, which only a decade later began turning many of the dandified men who work the sidelines into millionaires, Wooden was making only $32,500 a year when he retired in 1975. Any reservations about his decision to quit evaporated when an alumnus came up to him after his final game, in which UCLA defeated Kentucky for—what else?—an NCAA title. "Great victory, John," the booster said. "It makes up for your letting us down last year."

It seems that his unmatched record is worthy of unstinting acclaim but for one thing. In spite of all the players he turned into champions, and the example he set for his profession, Wooden helped institutionalize that bane of all players and coaches, the thing that turns fans and administrators into ingrates and monsters: great, debilitating expectations. — ALEXANDER WOLFF

Photograph by NEIL LEIFER, 1965


UCLA
STAFF
J. WOODEN
F2
C
F1

17
SECRETARIAT

IT ALL BEGAN UNFOLDING LIKE SOME EPOCHAL SCENE OF A DRAMA turned suddenly surreal, with tricks being played by the lights and shadows of the late-afternoon sun, with the solitary silhouettes of the horse and rider floating out there, disembodied, toward the far turn. Through the rising, vaporous curtains of heat. Soundless, in the distance. All alone.

Secretariat had just rushed past the halfway mark of the 1½-mile Belmont Stakes in 1:09⅘, the fastest six-furlong split in the history of the race, and now he was humming through the fourth quarter in :24⅖, toward an opening mile in an unearthly 1:34⅕. There, in that eerily dappled gloaming, Secretariat began turning the oldest of all the Triple Crown races into his own tour de force, drawing off to lead a beaten Sham by two lengths . . . four . . . six. Rarely in sport has a game's most brilliant competitor risen at precisely the right juncture in history—at the perfect coordinates of place, occasion and time—and seized the day by delivering a performance so original, so stunning in its clarity, that it raised to a new level the standard by which all who followed would be measured. And Secretariat, plunging toward the far turn, was raising it right then.

It was 5:40 p.m. on June 9, 1973, and what had begun 38 months before had all quite suddenly come to this. On the night of March 29, 1970, the manager of The Meadow stud farm in Doswell, Va., Howard Gentry, hastily left a midnight game of pool in the basement of his home and headed in the darkness toward a solitary light that burned above the two-stall foaling barn in the corner of a field. Somethingroyal, one of the nation's preeminent broodmares, was about to give birth to her foal by Bold Ruler, America's prepotent sire. He was a good-sized foal, with hips so wide that Gentry feared he might have trouble clearing the breach. Nonetheless, at precisely 10 minutes past midnight, with Gentry and a companion tugging on the forelegs, the whole roasted chestnut finally appeared. Gentry stood back and declared, "There is a whopper!"

It was a propitious declaration. In the course of his 16-month racing career, Secretariat rose higher and faster and larger than any U.S. horse of modern times. By the end of his 1972 season, he had so dominated the nation's juveniles, winning nearly every major stakes race on the East Coast, that he was unanimously voted Horse of the Year. It was the first time a 2-year-old had ever been so honored. That winter, Secretariat became the most expensive animal in history when he was sold to a breeding syndicate for the then shocking sum of $6.08 million.

He had it all: impeccable bloodlines, a dazzling turn of foot and a physique so flawless that Charles Hatton, the aging dean of American turf writers, called him "the most perfect racehorse I have ever seen." Secretariat was the quintessential running machine, and he was never more keenly tuned than he was in 1973 for the greatest showcase of his sport, the Triple Crown. It had been 25 years since a horse had swept the three races—Citation, in 1948—and many had begun to wonder whether it would ever be done again.

So Secretariat's quest was all the more riveting. In the Kentucky Derby, after dropping back to last, he gradually picked up one horse after another, hooked Sham off the last turn and powered down the stretch to a still-record finish in 1:59⅖. In a feat unprecedented for a 10-furlong race, Secretariat ran each successive quarter faster than the preceding one. Two weeks later in the Preakness, after again trailing early, he suddenly charged through a blazing second quarter of :21 and change, then sailed home to beat Sham by 2½. The Pimlico teletimer had malfunctioned, obscuring the official final time, but two veteran *Daily Racing Form* clockers hand-timed Secretariat in 1:53⅖, giving him his second track record in two weeks. (The official time was eventually recorded as 1:54⅖, short of the record.)

It was as though, like a brilliant jazz musician, he was making the whole thing up as he went along, improvising something different for each race. All jockey Ron Turcotte had to do was hang on. He knew better than to interfere: *Quiet, genius at work.* With the country sunk in the Watergate abyss, Secretariat became the most diverting icon of the day, a $6 million equine Adonis with more presence than any horse in memory. And so it came about that the Belmont, on national TV, offered the ideal venue for the greatest performance in the history of the sport.

Photograph by HEINZ KLUETMEIER, 1973

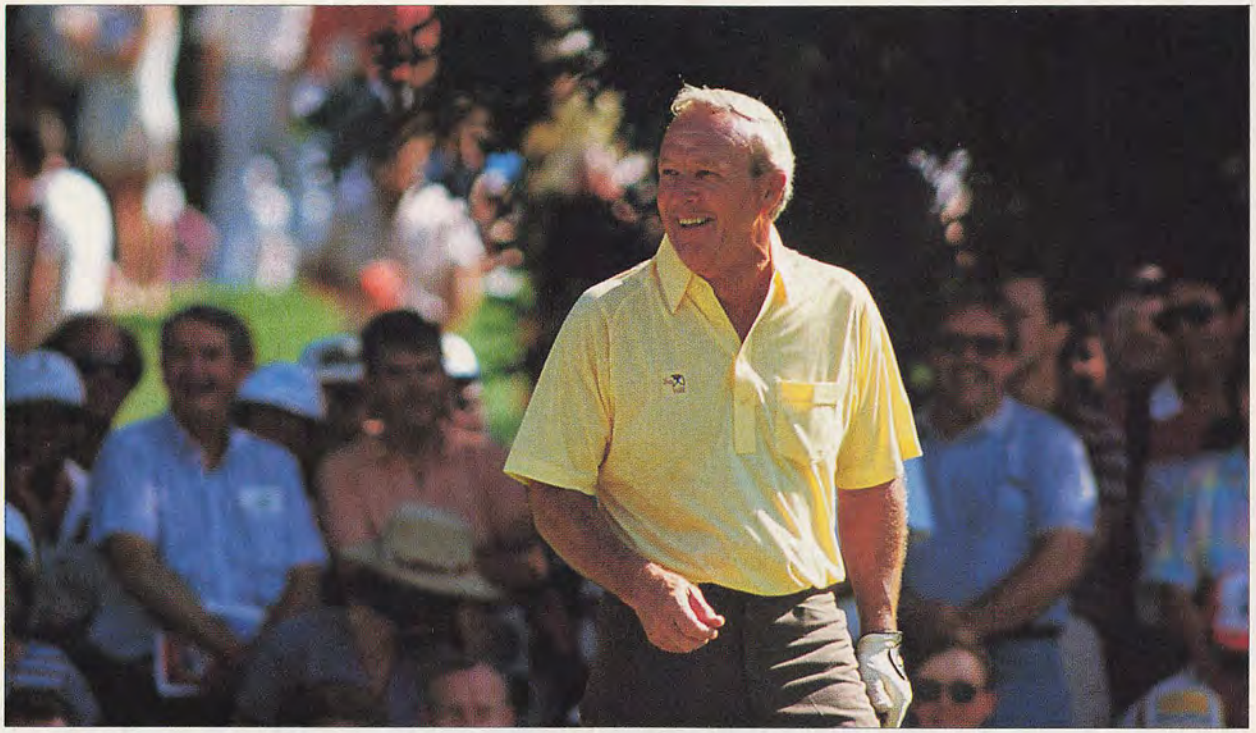
17 • SECRETARIAT

The colt came to it with more than the winds of history at his back. Secretariat was a prodigious eater—he was devouring 15 quarts of oats a day during his Triple Crown season—and he needed extremely hard, fast workouts to burn this off and keep him fit. He was a morning whirlwind. Working out eight days before the Belmont, he bounded a mile in a sensational 1:34⅘ and galloped out nine furlongs in 1:48⅗, stakes-race time. Clockers were checking their watches with each other.

What was going on here? The definitive answer would not come until 16 years later, on the day Secretariat died, when Dr. Thomas Swerczek, a professor of veterinary science at the University of Kentucky, removed the animal's heart while performing the necropsy. Normal in all other ways, Secretariat's heart was about twice the size of the normal horse's pump and a third larger than any equine heart Swerczek had ever seen. "We were all shocked," he said.

No more so, though, than everyone who saw the Belmont. Sweeping into the far turn, leaving Sham behind, Secretariat widened his lead to seven lengths, then eight. Ten. Twelve. Fifteen. Twenty. He turned for home alone. In front by 22. Turcotte did not move. Twenty-four. Twenty-six. The oldest horsemen on the grounds were struck dumb. Twenty-seven. Twenty-eight. Seventy yards from the wire, Turcotte glanced at the timer, saw 2:19 . . . 2:20. The record was 2:26⅗. He looked away, then did a double take. He started scrubbing. Twenty-nine lengths. Thirty. The colt took a final leap. Thirty-one. The timer froze: 2:24. Twenty-one years later, it is frozen there still. — WILLIAM NACK

Photograph by
JERRY COOKE, 1973



"There's no way I can ever give the galleries as much as they've given me." *Arnold Palmer*

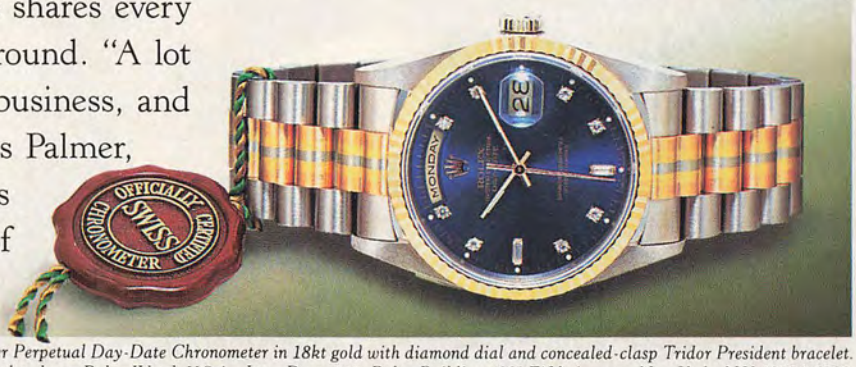
Few athletes have forged as enduring or intimate a bond with sports fans as Arnold Palmer. The sight of his slashing swing on black-and-white television screens in the late fifties, when he won the first of his four Masters Championships, helped launch the modern game. Some thirty years later, his commitment to the Senior Tour transformed an intriguing notion into a major force.

The key to Arnold's charisma has always been his unique accessibility. His open, determined face shares every up and down of a crucial round. "A lot of athletes go about their business, and don't relate to people," says Palmer, "but I like having the folks with me." And his army of followers knows it.

As Lee Trevino once pointed out, "Arnie has more people watching him pack the trunk of his car than we have watching us on the golf course."

Like other great champions, Palmer is a fierce competitor who earned his reputation with remarkable performances under great pressure. Not surprisingly, he has chosen a timepiece that made its name in the same way. Rolex.

ROLEX



Rolex Oyster Perpetual Day-Date Chronometer in 18kt gold with diamond dial and concealed-clasp Tridor President bracelet. Write for brochure. Rolex Watch U.S.A., Inc., Dept. 463, Rolex Building, 665 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022-5383. Rolex, ♛, Oyster Perpetual, Day-Date, Tridor and President are trademarks.

18 JOE NAMATH

ONCE UPON A TIME, JOE NAMATH HAD GOOD KNEES. HE WAS FAST AND elusive, and he could dunk a basketball two-handed. Of course, he could always throw a football, much like a great fighter whipping a right cross directly from a hunched shoulder, full of sting and accuracy and more force than seemed possible. University of Alabama head coach Bear Bryant called him "the greatest athlete I have ever coached." But the knee injuries came in rapid succession toward the end of Namath's Alabama career, and the surgeries followed, and the brash, working-class quarterback from Beaver Falls, Pa., quickly metamorphosed into that most poignant of icons, the young, wounded hero.

When he signed a pro contract in 1965 with the New York Jets of the upstart and ridiculed American Football League, Namath found himself fulfilling a role never before played: young wounded hero as cocky, antiestablishment media beacon. He was, after all, in New York City, and the lights were shining, the scribes scribbling, the cameras rolling. And Namath did have prior experience making headlines: He had been kicked off the Alabama team, for drinking and carousing, before the last two games of his junior season, only to return the following year and lead the Crimson Tide to the 1964 national championship on a gimpy right knee. Upon arriving in New York, he was a natural for a nation in the throes of a sexual revolution and in endless debate over an individual's right to "do his own thing."

Namath *did* his own thing. He grew a Fu Manchu mustache, wore white shoes afield, smoked cigarettes, invested in a boisterous Manhattan club called Bachelors III, starred in a panty-hose commercial and published an autobiography entitled *I Can't Wait Until Tomorrow 'Cause I Get Better Looking Every Day*. A bachelor who loved to chase "foxes," he once proclaimed, "I'd rather go to Vietnam than get married." The swinging dude was also a bonus baby—remember that phrase?—and his first football contract, a three-year deal for $427,000, was considered huge enough by some to signify the decline of Western values, if not civilization itself. But Jet owner Sonny Werblin, a Hollywood impresario who understood hype, had planned it that way. Broadway Joe was precisely the man for Werblin, the Jets and, ultimately, the AFL. When Namath publicly guaranteed that the Jets would beat the National Football League champion Baltimore Colts in Super Bowl III, people saw it as heresy—not to mention lunacy. But Werblin saw it for what it was: youthfulness, confidence, show biz.

The Jets were 19½-point underdogs going into that game in January 1969. As grasping, underclass wannabes trying to dethrone the conservative, respected Colts, they represented rebels everywhere who dared to challenge the status quo. Before Namath the athletes who boasted publicly of their skills had been mostly boxers and black men and lower-class scrabblers with little to lose from censure. Just as white musicians usurped and popularized the licks of black rock-and-roll pioneers like Chuck Berry, so did Namath usurp the soul and cool of the black athletes he hung out with back in Beaver Falls. "We rubbed off on him," said one of those black friends, Butch Ryan. "He picked up our slang. He started liking soul food. He grew up just like us."

When the Jets stunned the Colts with their 16–7 Super Bowl victory, they shocked America, too. Underdogs everywhere rejoiced. Overdogs licked their wounds and reexamined their status; not the least of these was the NFL, which just four months later agreed to merge with the once-scorned AFL. The legend of Joe Namath, meanwhile, was guaranteed, forever disguising the fact that Namath, in his 13-year pro career, would play on just four plus-.500 teams. He peaked and faded fast. Wounded heroes do that.

Since his playing days Namath has metamorphosed into another being: a low-key married man and doting father of two children. Visiting last season's Super Bowl XXVIII in Atlanta, he looked tanned, lean and content at 51, even kneeling on artificial knees to pose with adoring kids who know him mostly as a famous guy who sells stuff on TV. As his agent Jimmy Walsh predicted almost 20 years ago, "Eventually, Joe Namath the football player will not be as significant as the *idea* of him." For a while there, though, the idea was real. And wild as can be. — RICK TELANDER

Photograph by NEIL LEIFER, 1974

19
Dr. Harold Gores

THE VAST SWARDS OF SYNTHETICS, THE ACRYLIC ACRES, THE POLYESTER parks we play in—these were spun off from a technology that was meant, in the beginning at least, to serve the fitness needs of America's children. AstroTurf, as we've come to know it, was not, as you might suppose, born as an answer to the surfacing needs of America's stadiums. In truth the scientists weren't thinking at all about the future of football in Buffalo as they stretched elastomers. It never occurred to them. They were looking for something that the kids in New York City playgrounds could "bounce on."

It is another of those accidental applications, an invention now more famous for something other than its intended use. Alas, the kids in New York City playgrounds still run around mostly on asphalt, but almost every city north of Knoxville has, whether we like it or not, some kind of stadium carpeted in the bright green plastic that has altered the way our games are played.

The stuff was made famous in the mid-'60s when Judge Roy Hofheinz challenged the Monsanto Company, primarily a chemicals manufacturer, to do some interior decorating in his new Houston Astrodome. The judge's grass, underexposed to natural light, kept dying and was unsightly. So Monsanto produced some 14,000 square yards of an odd padded material, rolled it out under the dome and stitched it together with three miles of zippers. It was a huge hit. Artificial turf, manufactured by several companies now, is in use in hundreds of stadiums, domed and otherwise, in countries throughout the world and is known, whatever the trademark, by the judge's weatherproofed ball field.

But the turf was actually invented because a New York educator was looking for a way that kids in city parks could play without skinning their knees. It was the notion of the late Dr. Harold Gores that if there were some soft surface that could be cheaply made, then more urban playgrounds could be built—on school rooftops, perhaps. Gores was the first president of the Educational Facilities Laboratories (EFL), a nonprofit research organization that was developed and funded in the late 1950s by the Ford Foundation in response to published studies, done during the Korean War, that showed that city boys were generally in much worse physical shape than their country brethren. Gores reckoned the reason was the lack of open space, the dearth of fields and playgrounds in urban areas. He decided that if he couldn't actually make a tree grow in Brooklyn, he could at least get somebody to make him a counterfeit countryside there.

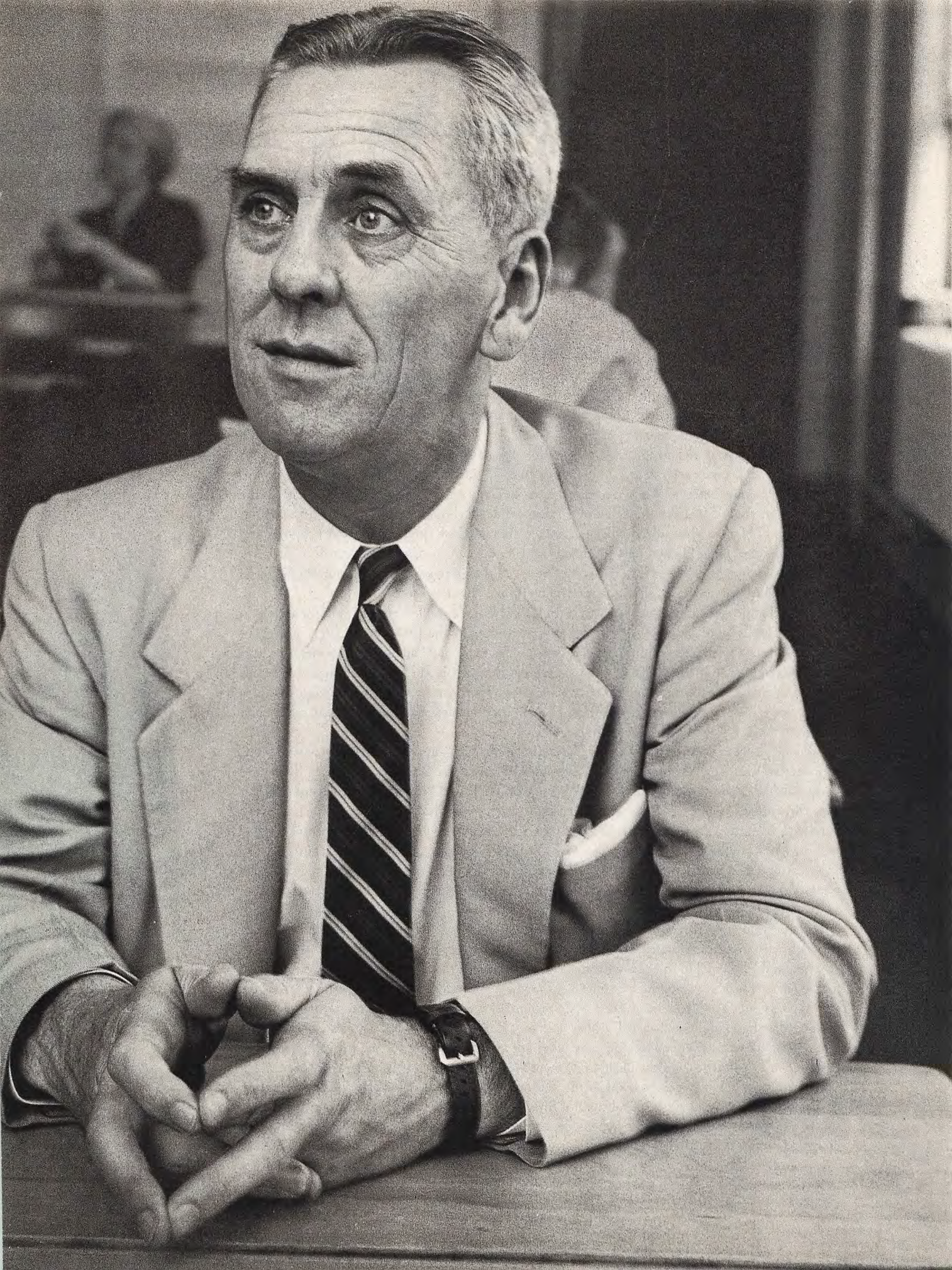
Gores asked Monsanto to work on his idea. His widow, Helen, remembers: "He'd come home night after night with swatches. They all looked like rubber and felt like rubber to me." There were unusual requirements, standards that real grass never had to meet. It didn't need to be watered or cut, but it had to drain, provide some bounce and have longevity. Finally Monsanto came up with something similar to what Gores had envisioned. Monsanto called it ChemGrass, and in 1964 EFL underwrote its first installation—to the tune of $200,000—for the field house at the Moses Brown School, a private boys' school in Providence. (It wasn't exactly inner-city, as Gores had intended for the product, but the school's headmaster had served on Ford Foundation committees.)

The faux field, however, was not destined for many schoolyards. Maintenance might be low, but that first sodding remains expensive. A spokesman for Balsam Corporation, which bought the AstroTurf business from Monsanto in the 1980s, says, "It really hasn't been widely used for playgrounds. Soon after its invention, the product went quickly into use for athletic fields."

When Gores died last year at the age of 83, the Associated Press noted his contributions as "an adviser on education matters to presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson." Under Gores the EFL persuaded schools to accept air conditioning and carpeting, both virtually unused before the 1970s, and to eliminate some interior walls so children could enjoy freedom of movement. He was known for innovation. But none of the obituaries remembered to give him credit for his part in the development of all those year-round indoor meadows where grown men, if not the boys he meant to help, play amid the fresh scent of nylon.

— RICHARD HOFFER

Photograph by JAMES COYNE, 1957



20

JACK NICKLAUS

AS A CADDIE, JACK NICKLAUS WAS HOPELESS. CADDYING FOR HIS SON Gary at a U.S. Open qualifying round in 1983, he miscounted the clubs in the bag. It cost Gary a four-shot penalty, and he missed the cut. The year before, caddying for his son Jack Jr., he lost the boy's ball on the first hole.

Luckily, Nicklaus had other work. He has been the best golfer to ever live, by a par 5. Take a roll call of great players since 1935: Byron Nelson, Sam Snead, Ben Hogan, Arnold Palmer, Gary Player, Lee Trevino, Raymond Floyd, Tom Watson, Seve Ballesteros and Nick Faldo. No *two* of them have won more majors than Nicklaus. With 18 under his belt, Nicklaus can give every one of them four a side and still end up laughing. What boggles the brain is that Nicklaus also finished second in majors 19 times. At his peak Nicklaus was so crushing an opponent that most players lost to him just driving into the parking lot. J.C. Snead once said, "When you go head-to-head against Nicklaus, he knows he's going to beat you, you know he's going to beat you, and *he knows you know* he's going to beat you."

In his prime he was hell on spikes. As impossibly long as John Daly is now, compared with his peers, so Nicklaus was in his day. As remarkably fine as Nick Price hits irons now, Nicklaus was better. As sublimely pure as Ben Crenshaw putts, Nicklaus was every bit as uncanny. That is the scariest part. The Nicklaus of the '60s and '70s was head and shoulders above everybody else, but mostly head. He was the supreme thinker, never distracted by the bells and the trophies and emotions of the thing. He was only interested in the nuts and yardage and sweat of it. Once, at St. Andrews, somebody asked him if, because he loved the place so much, emotion might get in his way. "That's kind of a silly question, don't you think?" he answered.

Even today, he is about as romantic as a carburetor. He has always exercised a simple and resolute will over his mind and body. On his flight home following the 1967 Ryder Cup he decided it was time to start losing his famous bulk. He called in his tailor and had him make pants for a man 15 pounds lighter. In three weeks, he fit them. He saw himself on tape smoking a cigarette, decided he looked like a "gangster," and quit, then and there. He went through his first winless season on the PGA Tour in 1979, and, determined to make a comeback, went out the next season and won both the U.S. Open and PGA Championship.

Look all you want. There is not a shingle missing in his brilliant career. He won where he was supposed to win: Augusta and Firestone (six times each), Pebble Beach (four), St. Andrews and Baltusrol (twice each), Oakmont, Muirfield. He won on Tour 70 times. He won every major at least three times; nobody else has won every major even twice. Yet it wasn't easy. He began as a hero with no home, showing up at the 1962 Open at Oakmont—his first U.S. Open as a pro—looking like something you might pull from the bottom pouch of your golf bag. Fat and rumpled and wearing a dorky rain hat, his task was to conquer the beloved Arnie and his Army, who booed Nicklaus's good shots and yelled, "Miss it, Jack!" on the putting green. He beat Palmer 71–74 in an 18-hole playoff at that Open, and golf was never the same. He was not homespun like Sam Snead, not funny like Trevino. His pants didn't need hitching like Palmer's. Instead, he won over America with pure, unbleached excellence. Unlike any player since, he took over the wheel of golf and never flinched in the heavy traffic. Even the Senior PGA Tour has been no speed bump for Nicklaus. He won five of the first nine Senior events he entered and then grew bored. In June, at 54, he was one shot off the pace after the first round of the U.S. Open. He is not done even yet.

Long after he's gone Nicklaus will still be with us. Of America's top 100 courses, as selected by *Golf Digest*, 12 were designed by Nicklaus. They represent only a few of the 115 courses he has designed in 23 countries worldwide, not counting the 25 others currently under construction.

It is pure irony that Nicklaus shanked the racism issue earlier this year because anybody close to him knows that he is, quite literally, color blind. He couldn't tell you a green number from a red on a leader board if the winner's check depended on it. Maybe that's why Nicklaus put up so many red numbers his whole life. Made things simpler. — RICK REILLY

Photograph by NEIL LEIFER, 1965

U.S.G.A. OPEN
1965
BELLERIVE C.C.

21

BILL RUSSELL

YOU WONDER WHY THE RAPID-FIRE FILM MONTAGES OF THE '60s ALMOST never show Bill Russell. The music of the Beatles always is played in the background ("You say you want a rev-o-loo-tion. . . ."), and the fire hoses in Selma merge into the assassinations of two Kennedys and Martin Luther King Jr. and then into psychedelic distortions and then into Hank Aaron at bat or Joe Namath on the run and then into the war in Vietnam and Muhammad Ali at the draft board . . . but never does the picture of Russell grace the screen. Why? No athlete has dominated any team sport for any decade the way Russell dominated pro basketball in the '60s.

You look back at Russell's success—his team, the Boston Celtics, won the NBA title in nine of the 10 years of the '60s and in 11 of the 13 years he played center—and you think that his place in history is assured. He was the MVP five times. He was the first black coach of a major U.S. professional team, winning the NBA title in two of his three seasons as the Celtic player-coach. He was an innovator, changing his sport by virtually inventing the blocked shot and tipping the game's balance from offensive flash to defensive tenacity. What more did he have to do?

"Before Russell came along, no one ever had blocked shots in the pros or forced teams out of their offensive patterns," former Celtic coach Red Auerbach once said. "He put a whole new sound in the game, the sound of his footsteps. A guy would be going in all alone for a layup, and he'd hear the sound of those footsteps behind him. After this happened a few times, guys started hearing Russell's footsteps even when he wasn't there."

You wonder if he arrived on the scene too early, before the NBA became "Fan-tas-tic." You wonder if Russell's long battle with Wilt Chamberlain has, with time, been misread: Is it easier now to gasp at the idea of a player scoring 100 points in a single game than at 11 championships in 13 years? Is it easier to look at the other Hall of Famers on the old Celtics and say, "Well, Russell always had a good team around him," than to remember that he was the soul of the team?

You wonder, too—probably wonder the most—about how much Russell's own personality has contributed to his strangely quiet place. He is one of the most cantankerous figures ever to have walked across the American sports page. Few other athletes spoke their minds more often on more controversial subjects. No other athlete did less to curry favor with the fan. From the time he arrived with the Celtics as a 6′ 9⅝″ rookie in 1956, fresh from two NCAA championships at the University of San Francisco, he was his own man. He romanced no one, danced for no one. He played basketball. Period.

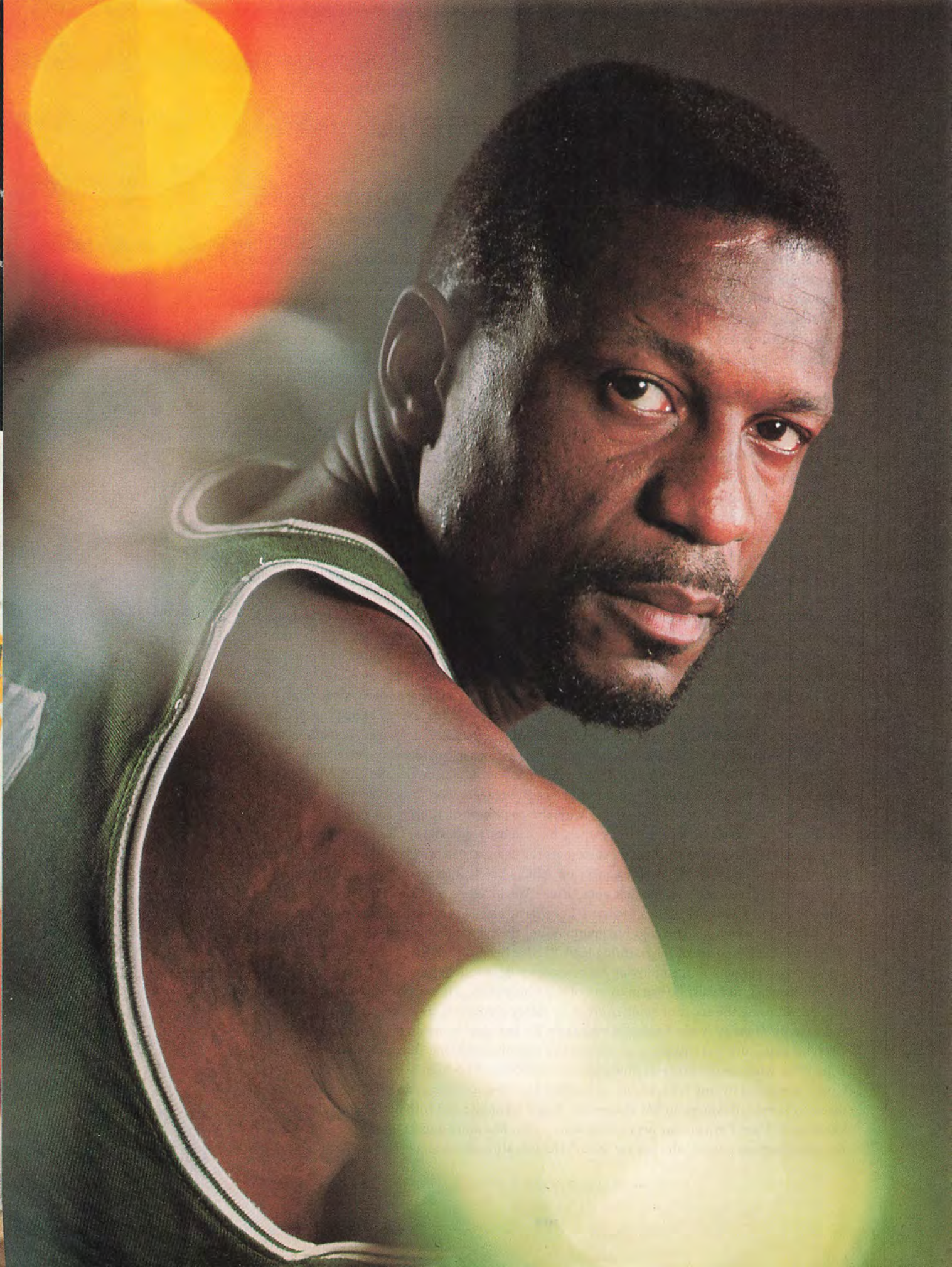
"What I'm resentful of, you know, is when they say you owe the public this and owe the public that," he said in a *Saturday Evening Post* article in 1964. "You owe the public the same thing it owes you. Nothing. . . . I'd say I'm like most people in this type of life; I have an enlarged ego. I refuse to misrepresent myself. I refuse to smile and be nice to the kiddies. I don't think it is incumbent upon me to set a good example for anybody's kids but my own."

He refused to sign autographs. He consistently lacerated the city of Boston and the people who cheered him, citing examples of racism. At a time when the black athlete was quietly pushing back the remaining barriers on the playing fields and the rosters, Russell was loudly calling for faster and broader change. His game was to keep people off-balance. He did this with Chamberlain, greeting his adversary warmly one day, then walking past him silently the next, always leaving Wilt to wonder who this large, bearded guy really was. He did this with the world in general, sometimes laughing with the loudest cackle imaginable, at other times turning distant.

Do the people who write history remember the rebuff better than the rebound? Do they remember his refusal to attend his induction into the Hall of Fame more than the reasons for the induction? Earlier this year, Russell returned to Boston, the city he hated, for one spring weekend to do a job he never would do before. He signed autographs. The price for autographing a piece of paper was $295 and a basketball $495. The local press, of course, did an easy tap dance on his head. You had to laugh. The greatest basketball player of his time—sorry, Wilt—still couldn't care less what people thought.

— LEIGH MONTVILLE

Photograph by ROBERT HUNTZINGER, 1965



22
HOWARD COSELL

THERE HAD NEVER BEEN ANYONE QUITE LIKE HOWARD COSELL IN THE American ball yard when he made his entrance into the world of sports, stoop-shouldered under the weight of a 40-pound tape recorder that he carried on his back like some slightly demented word Sherpa from Brooklyn. But American originals have always been a dime a dozen, getting somewhere first and then being trampled by the herd that follows, and yet when Cosell decided to leave the broadcast booth after 38 years, he was still the only one doing whatever it was he did.

Which is probably just as well—there were times when it seemed that even one Cosell was one too many. Audiences never seemed quite sure what to make of him, or what to *do* about him. That was his peculiar fascination. A poll conducted by *TV Guide* in the late '70s determined that the most-despised sportscaster in America was Howard Cosell. The same poll concluded that the most-beloved sportscaster in America was Howard Cosell.

A peerless boxing announcer whose staccato delivery carried the rhythm of the ring and the concussive weight of a right cross, Cosell had the verbal wherewithal to stand toe-to-toe with the new champion Muhammad Ali in the ring after matches. Cosell, unlike most Americans, referred to the champ as Ali as soon as he learned of the boxer's conversion to Islam, and when Ali declared himself a conscientious objector to the war in Vietnam and refused induction into the Army, Cosell was among the first and one of the few figures in the sports world to publicly support Ali's stand on constitutional grounds.

Howard William Cohen had been eight years into a law practice in 1954 when he chucked his $30,000 salary for a $250-a-week radio job and began to schlepp a tape recorder from locker room to locker room. As a reporter he had the passion of an advocate, and he weighed in early and often with his opinions on the landmark legal struggles in sports—Curt Flood's challenge to baseball's reserve clause and the NFL's antitrust exemption, among others. This had about it the unfamiliar whiff of journalism and became Cosell's contribution to the otherwise bland gee-whizzery of sports announcing.

When he moved from radio to television, he knew that he would never occupy the plum position in the booth, for he was far too much an acquired taste to ever survive as a play-by-play man. So it was that when ABC Sports president Roone Arledge put *Monday Night Football* on the air in 1970, he created for Cosell a position previously unknown in broadcast sports: blowhard. And for 14 seasons Cosell amused, amazed, outraged, annoyed and attracted audiences, building the Monday-night broadcast into something that was often bigger than the game itself.

His popularity rode on a teeter-totter with the contempt of those who could not stand his pomposity, his intrusiveness on the games, his celebrity sideshows. Taverns began drawing crowds on Monday nights by offering customers the chance to heave a brick through a TV screen with Cosell's face on it. His performances on ABC's baseball telecasts were considered such a defilement of the sacred pastime that once, after a World Series telecast in Baltimore, his limousine was stopped and rocked by angry fans. For this he played the perpetual martyr, imperious in the manner in which he delivered his opinions and then wounded when the retorts of his foes arrived in the cluster fire of the morning mail. "I have been vilified more than Charles Manson," Howard said at one point, employing his customary light touch. But he never seemed to tire of his solecisms, until finally he began to tire of the whole thing. He withdrew bitterly from boxing in 1982, accusing the sport of being overrun by sleazy characters, as if this were something new, and gave up *Monday Night Football* a year later. By the time he made his retirement official, in 1992, his departure was treated as a footnote to a time that had long since passed.

In 1986, while under cross-examination in the USFL's $1.5 billion lawsuit against the NFL, Cosell was asked by one NFL lawyer to confirm his oft-quoted assertion that he was one of the three great men of American TV, along with Walter Cronkite and Johnny Carson. Cosell told it like it was: "I feel I'm a unique personality who . . . has had more impact upon sports broadcast in America than any person who has yet lived." He was, after all, under oath. —BRUCE NEWMAN

Photograph by TONY TRIOLO, 1971

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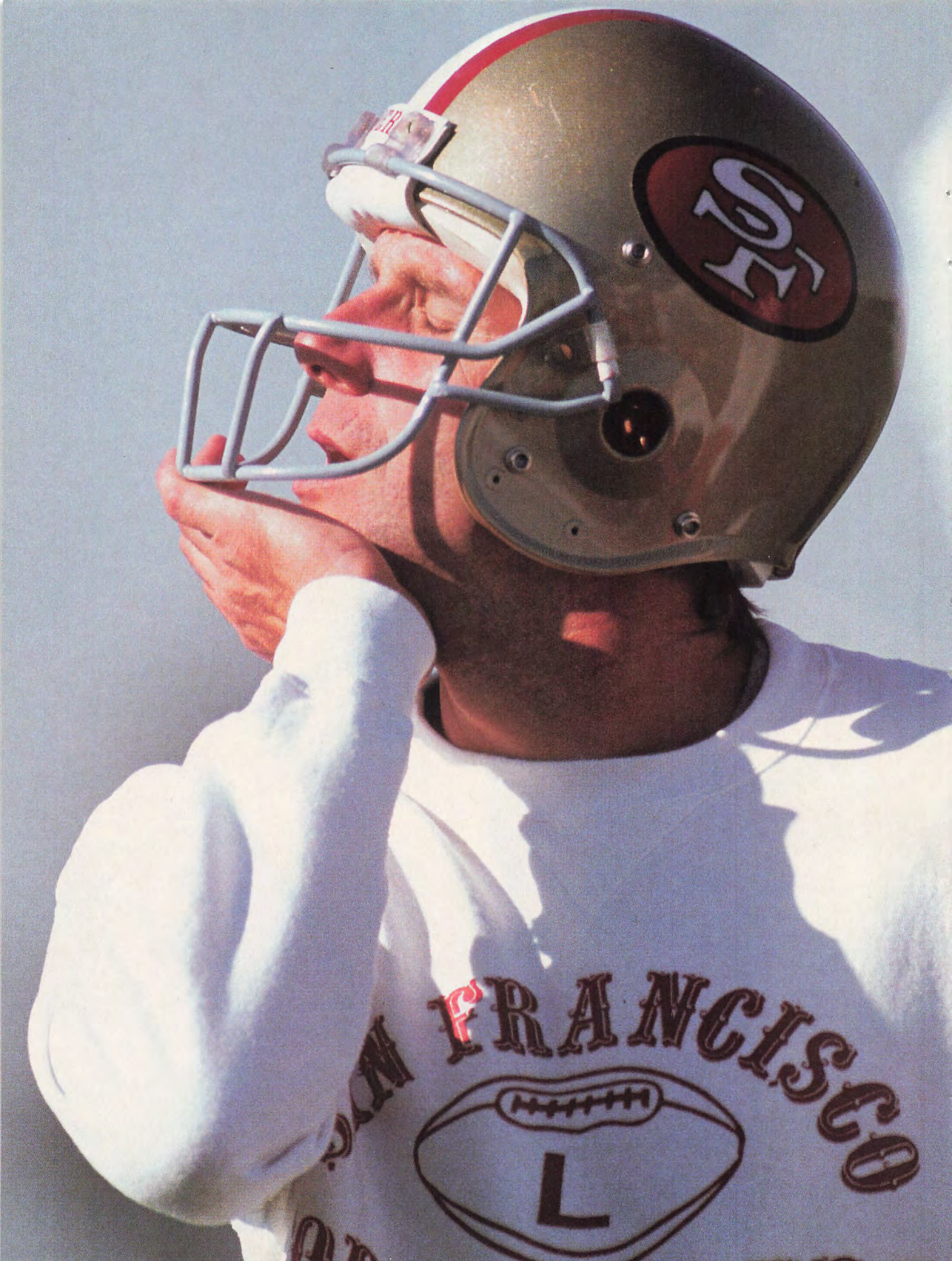
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23

JOE MONTANA

JOE MONTANA IS A WINNER, AND MAYBE WE SHOULD JUST LEAVE IT AT that. The 38-year-old quarterback with four Super Bowl victories, two NFL MVP awards and three Super Bowl MVP awards simply keeps on winning. It's only when you try to explain *why* that it gets tough.

Body? Hah! At 6′ 2″, fragile and bird-legged, Montana looks like a five-year-old's stick-figure doodle. Arm? Even at its healthiest, it was never a rifle. When Montana was drafted out of Notre Dame in 1979, pro scouts rated his arm "average." These days it's a wonder that the two halves of his right wing are even connected. In August '91, during his 13th year with the San Francisco 49ers, he tore the common flexor tendon completely off the elbow bone. Holes were drilled into the bone, the tendon was reattached, and after missing almost the entire '92 season, Montana emerged as the old, winning Joe, only this time with a new team, the Kansas City Chiefs.

Personality? Montana's a nice guy, decent, calm as a lagoon—but a yeller, screamer, shaker-upper? Forget it. He describes himself as "quiet and sort of laid-back." The "sort of" is stretching it. Work habits? Montana works hard at the mental game, but as for weightlifting and all that physical stuff, well, isn't that why they invented offensive linemen?

As it is with all geniuses, Montana does things that are inexplicable. How can you figure, for instance, his ability to lead his teams to wins when there simply isn't enough time to do so? Consider just a couple of his fourth-quarter comebacks in college. Down 30–10 with 13 minutes left on the clock against Air Force in 1975, his sophomore year, Montana whipped together a 31–30 Notre Dame victory. As a senior, down 34–12 to Houston in the Cotton Bowl with 7:37 remaining, he engineered a 35–34 comeback win, scoring the last TD on a fourth-down pass with two seconds left, *in an ice storm*, after suffering hypothermia so bad that at halftime he had to be pumped full of enough bouillon to start a soup kitchen. In his pro career, now in its 16th season, Montana has served up 29 fourth-quarter comeback wins. "He's got this resourcefulness, this something that's hard to put into words," Montana's mentor, former 49er coach Bill Walsh, once said after much thought. "He won't choke. Or rather, if he ever does, you'll know everyone else has come apart first."

Back surgery, concussions, a numb left foot, knee problems, the radical elbow repair, age—none of it has kept Montana down. His comebacks on the field are matched only by his comebacks *to* the field. "He's like Lazarus," former 49er cornerback Tim McKyer once said. "You roll back the stone, Joe limps out—and throws for 300 yards."

The highest-rated quarterback in NFL history—for both career (93.1) and single season (112.4 in 1989)—he flat-out owns the playoffs, with NFL records for completions, yards and touchdowns. And the Super Bowl? If he's there, he wins. Montana has gone to numbers XVI, XIX, XXIII and XXIV and hasn't lost yet. He has completed 68% of his passes in Roman-numeral contests, and his opponents are still waiting for that first interception.

Montana often leads us into thinking that pro football is scripted in storybook fashion, that he is the white-hatted, all-American Comeback Kid for whom the impossible just happens. But his triumphs are forged from very real talent. He is a great athlete—he pitched three Little League perfect games back in Monongahela, Pa., for instance, and turned down a basketball scholarship to North Carolina State—but as a quarterback, it is his vision afield that sets him apart. Where others see chaos and danger after the snap, Montana sees order and opportunity. He has stated baldly that when he is flowing well in a game, and has time to throw, he cannot be stopped. The unflappability that sets him free is almost eerie.

You can't root against Joe Montana, even when he's playing against your team. He is decency rewarded, a guy who has paid his dues. He was once the seventh-string quarterback at Notre Dame. Eighty-one players were taken before him in the 1979 NFL draft. But Montana has never been one to brood. He simply puts it all aside—everything—when he trots onto the field, to the place where he was meant to be, where he's the best there ever was. — RICK TELANDER

Photograph by PETER READ MILLER, 1990

PAUL (BEAR) BRYANT

THE ULTIMATE COLLEGE FOOTBALL COACH WAS A LARGE, LUMBERING man with such a deep, rumbling voice that his nickname, Bear, fit him as snugly as the houndstooth hats he always wore pulled low over his eyes. In 38 years as head coach at Maryland, Kentucky, Texas A&M and Alabama, Paul Bryant won 323 games, still the major-college record, and took 29 teams to bowl games. At Alabama, where he coached from 1958 until his retirement after the 1982 season, he developed six national champions. His achievements are all the more impressive when you consider the formidable quality, by Bryant's own assessment, of every opposing team he played; Bryant didn't invent poor-mouthing, but he elevated it to such an art that listeners would wink and smile at his dire pregame evaluations.

The bigger Bryant became, the more he acted embarrassed by his stature—which, of course, endeared him even more to his legion of worshipers throughout Dixie. Southerners like humility in a man, and Bryant dished it out in such huge servings that his detractors often had trouble swallowing it. After wins, he would mumble praise for his opponents, his players and his staff. After losses, he would growl about the poor coaching job he had done. Asked once how he got his players to play so hard for him, Bryant snorted, "They aren't playing for me. They're playing for themselves, their sweethearts, the university. Playing for me? Shoot."

In his later years Bryant admitted that as a driven young coach, he would have done almost anything to win. He built his Kentucky teams in the late '40s and early '50s partly by paying players to come in from Ohio and Pennsylvania. At Texas A&M, which he took from 1–9 in 1954 to the Cotton Bowl three years later, he was punished by the NCAA for recruiting violations. The young Bryant was so demanding of his players that by today's standards, he would be regarded as abusive. "I don't know how small small is," says former LSU coach Charlie McClendon, who played for Bryant at Kentucky, "but he could make you feel that way."

Beneath his veneer of humility, Bryant had an ego that needed constant feeding. After the 1953 season he left Kentucky, which he had taken to the Orange, Sugar and Cotton bowls, for Texas A&M because he was envious of the power and popularity of Wildcat basketball coach Adolph Rupp. Bryant *had* to be the cynosure. In football-mad Alabama he found the perfect home, becoming such a huge figure there that his envelopes bore only *Bryant* as the return address.

His stated reason for returning to Alabama, where he had played end on the Crimson Tide's unbeaten 1935 Rose Bowl team, was pure Bryant: "Mama called." After coaching 'Bama to national titles in 1961, '64 and '65 with small, quick teams, he went into a relative slump in the late '60s. But just when some Alabama supporters were beginning to grouse that the game had passed him by, Bryant began recruiting black athletes. He also dumped his passing game in favor of the power-oriented wishbone offense. The result was national titles in '73, '78, and '79.

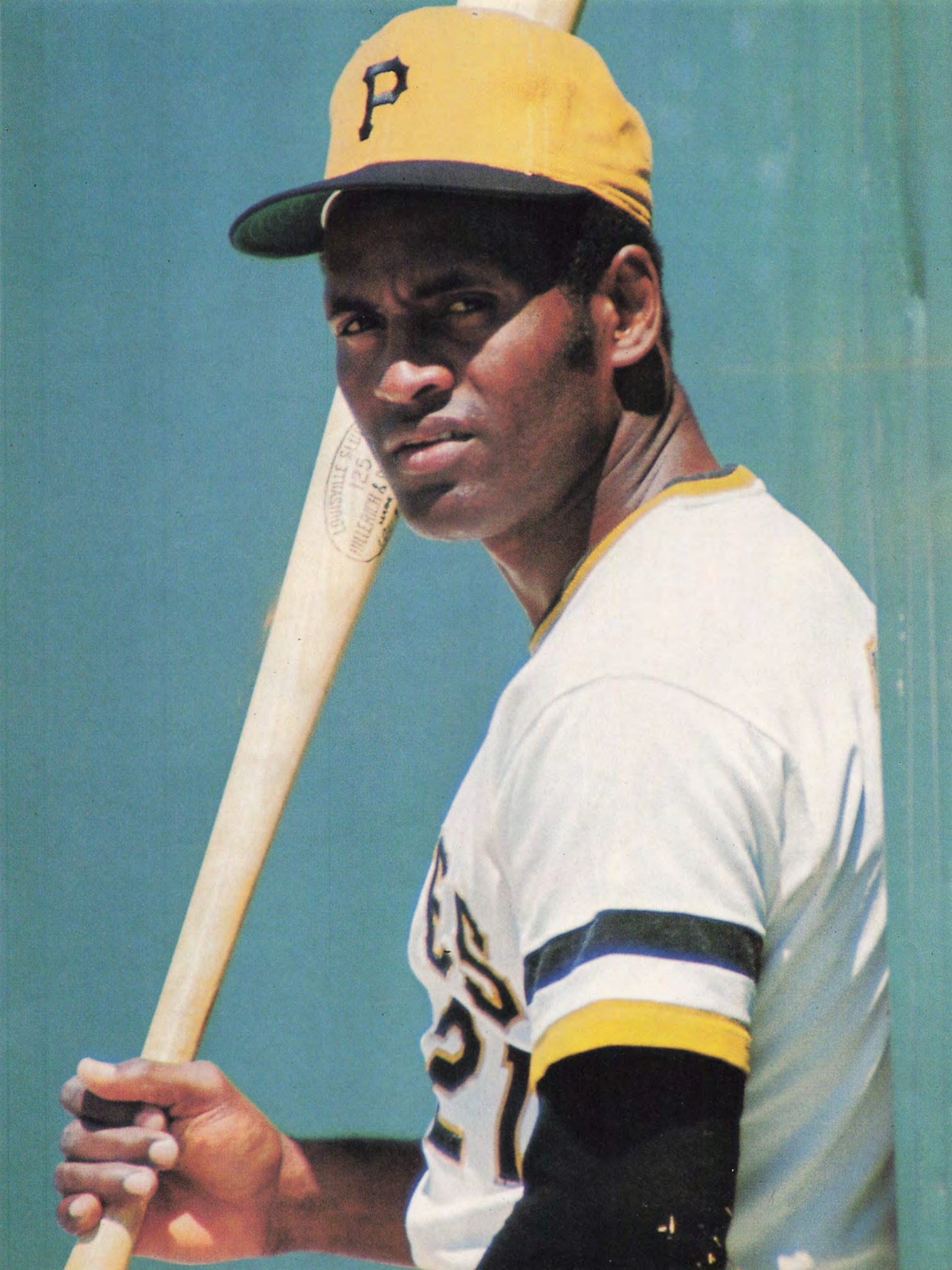
On Nov. 28, 1981, Bryant earned his 315th win, surpassing Amos Alonzo Stagg as the winningest coach in college history. Asked about the record, Bryant said, typically, " 'Bout all I did was stick with it." His 323rd and final victory was a 21–15 win over Illinois on Dec. 29, 1982, in the Liberty Bowl. Four weeks later, on Jan. 26, 1983, Bryant died of a heart attack at age 69.

To this day he is the enduring symbol of his profession, a coach who could make his players crave his love and respect so desperately that they gave everything they had every Saturday. Although he recruited a long list of All-Americas, his teams were salted liberally with scrappy overachievers who had something inside them that Bryant was able to tap. He always said if you gave him players who came from "good mamas and papas," he would take care of the rest.

Once you spilled your guts for the Bear, he never forgot you. On Oct. 3, 1980, after Alabama defeated Kentucky 45–0 to give Bryant his 300th victory, a reporter saw that the coach was wearing only one ring, a large one with a diamond in the center. The scribe asked which of Bryant's championship teams had given him the ring, and the wrinkles in his face arranged themselves in a soft smile. "It's a Texas A&M ring," he said. "I'm proud of the kids who gave it to me. Only won one game and lost nine." That was his only losing team in 38 years. —WILLIAM F. REED

Photograph by JOHN ZIMMERMAN, 1966

21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LOUISVILLE SLUGGER
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25

ROBERTO CLEMENTE

HE WAS ACTUALLY A MAN OF ORDINARY SIZE, 5′ 11″, 175 POUNDS. BUT HE wielded an improbably large bat—36 ounces—and a profoundly important influence that is felt even today, some 22 years after his plane plunged into the sea.

When he made his major league debut, on April 17, 1955, batting third and playing rightfield for the Pittsburgh Pirates, he was called Bob Clemente because many North Americans were still uncomfortable with a name as foreign as Roberto. Back then the young Puerto Rican was referred to by sportswriters as a "dusky flyer" and a "chocolate-colored islander," and his speech was regularly rendered in print as a subject for ridicule: "I no run fast cold weather." The slighting of Latin American players, who numbered only about two dozen in the major leagues of the late '50s, became even more obvious after the 1960 season when Clemente, who hit .314 with 16 homers and 94 RBIs for the world champion Pirates, finished *eighth* in the voting for the Most Valuable Player award won by teammate Dick Groat, who hit .325, but with two homers and 50 RBIs. Clemente's abilities as a player—his sensational throwing, his acrobatic fielding, his relentless hitting—overpowered the prejudice, however, and in 1966 he won the MVP. From 1961 until 1972, his *average* season was worthy of an MVP award: .331, 17 homers and 81 RBIs. No less an authority than Casey Stengel said Clemente was the best rightfielder he had ever seen. No less a pitcher than Sandy Koufax, when asked how to pitch Clemente, said, "Roll the ball."

Clemente also knew just how good he was. In 1955 a New York radio interviewer tried to pay him a compliment by saying, "You remind me of another rookie outfielder who could run, throw and get those clutch hits. Young fellow of ours, name of Willie Mays." Clemente's reply was, "Nonetheless, I play like Roberto Clemente." Nobody had ever seen an arm like his. He led National League outfielders in assists five times, an amazing achievement considering that no runner in his right mind chose to challenge him. He once threw out Lee May of the Cincinnati Reds trying to score from third—*on a single to right*. As for his hitting, well, Clemente never saw a ball he didn't like. "Pitch me outside," he would say, "I will hit .400. Pitch me inside, and you will not find the ball."

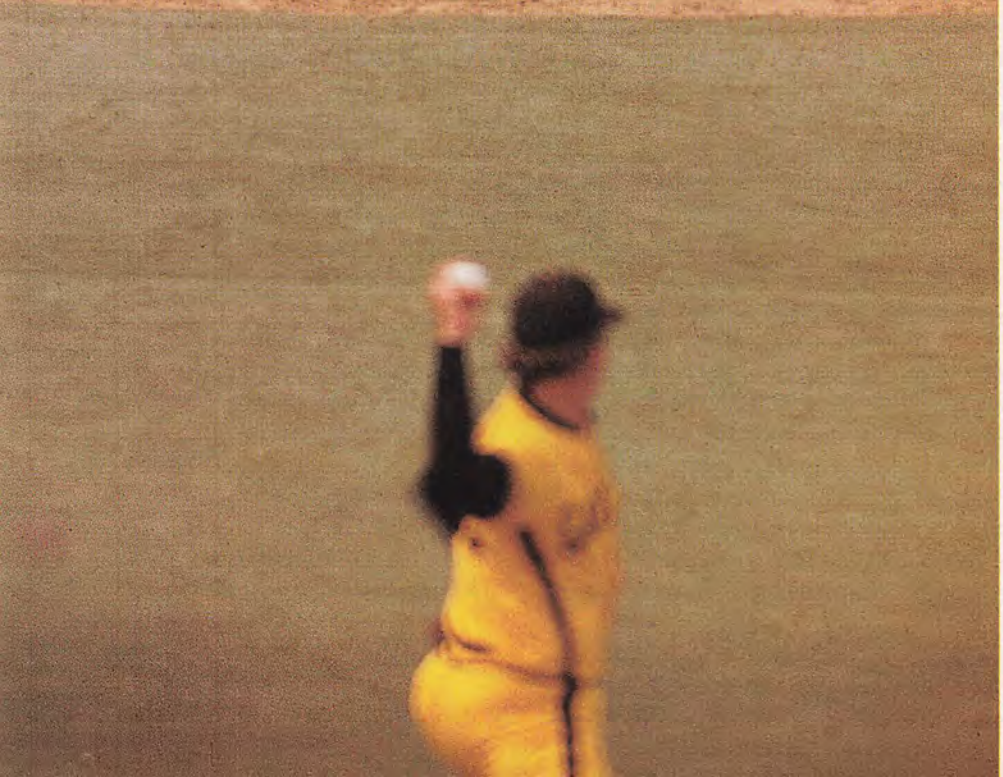
He performed while suffering from—and freely complaining about—myriad injuries. At one time or another, Clemente had backaches, headaches, stomachaches, malaria, insomnia, tonsillitis, bone chips in his right elbow, sore shoulders and assorted pulled muscles. Asked how he felt one spring, he said, "Well, my bad shoulder feels good, but my good shoulder feels bad." But as Clemente often pointed out, "If I was a hypochondriac, I wouldn't be playing." And his back problems gave us the characteristic Clemente gesture: the rotating of the neck as he stepped into the batter's box, his attempt at getting his troubled vertebrae into proper alignment.

Clemente was, among other things, a poet, a musician, a ceramic artist, a chiropractor and, above all, a gentle humanitarian. His wife, Vera, once said, "He would rather be late for a meeting with the governor than pass by a stranger who needed help with a tire." After the Pirates beat the New York Yankees in the 1960 World Series, Clemente skipped the team party to walk the streets of Pittsburgh and thank the fans. In his first pronouncement after the Pirates beat the Baltimore Orioles in the '71 Series, he addressed his parents in Puerto Rico, and said, in Spanish, "On this, the proudest day of my life, I ask for your blessing."

According to Puerto Rican broadcaster and journalist Luis Mayoral, "Clemente was our Jackie Robinson. He was on a crusade to show the American public what a Hispanic man, a black Hispanic man, was capable of." At a banquet in Houston in 1971, Clemente received a standing ovation from a largely white, Texan audience after saying, "If you have an opportunity to make things better, and you don't do that, you are wasting your time on this earth."

That desire to help others led to his death. On Dec. 31, 1972, he insisted on flying to Nicaragua to deliver supplies to victims of an earthquake. For whatever reason—engine trouble, an overload of cargo—the prop-driven DC-7 in which he was traveling crashed into the Caribbean soon after takeoff. The Pirate family, the city of Pittsburgh, the island of Puerto Rico felt a tremendous

Photograph by JAMES DRAKE, 1972



loss. But as a Pittsburgh nun wrote in a letter to Vera, "He fell into the water so that his spirit could be carried by the ocean to more places."

A few months after his death Clemente, whose 3,000th hit on Sept. 30, 1972, turned out to be his last, was elected to the Hall of Fame. But his baseball legacy extends far beyond a plaque in Cooperstown. As early as 1965 Clemente had talked of his dream of building a "sports city" for the kids of Puerto Rico. After a hesitant start Ciudad Deportiva Roberto Clemente is now thriving under the directorship of Vera Clemente, and its baseball program continues to produce a veritable major league All-Star team: Sandy and Roberto Alomar, Carlos Baerga, Juan Gonzalez, Ivan Rodriguez, Benito Santiago, Ruben Sierra and more. Today, one in every seven major league players is a Latin American, and for virtually all of them, Roberto Clemente stands as their most beloved pioneer.

Several of those players were at the '94 All-Star Game in Pittsburgh, where Clemente was honored with the unveiling of a bronze statue. Among those who raised funds for the statue was the Pirates' current rightfielder, Orlando Merced, who happened to grow up across the street from the Clemente family in Rio de Piedras. Says the 27-year-old Merced, "Roberto Clemente means a dream to me, and to a lot of kids and people. I never met him, but I played baseball inside his house, around the Gold Gloves, the silver bats, the trophies, the pictures. He has pushed me to be a better player and a better person. When they unveiled the statue, I was crying. It made me proud to be who I am and to be a Puerto Rican." —STEVE WULF

Photograph by
NEIL LEIFER, 1972

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26

Olga Korbut

SHE WAS 85 POUNDS OF PIGTAILED DETENTE, FLIPPING HER WAY INTO THE American consciousness. The Iron Curtain parted just a bit in August and September of 1972 at the Munich Olympics, and—*Hey, Martha, come in here and take a look at this little Russian girl*—Olga Korbut put a different, human face on her Communist country and changed the sport of gymnastics forever. It was quite a show.

Seventeen years old, 4′ 11″ tall, she seemed even younger and smaller, looking like a talented grandchild brought forth to perform at a family reunion in, say, Des Moines. How could she do those things she did? At a time when the average American's view of Soviets was limited mostly to pictures of dour politicians and generals reviewing the May Day parade in Red Square, here was this . . . Shirley Temple. She was perky and adorable, ebullient in victory, tearful in defeat.

Women's gymnastics previously had been more like an athletic ballet, and its champions were adults. Larissa Latynina of the Soviet Union had been 29 and a mother when she won six gold medals eight years earlier in Tokyo. Now, here was this waif throwing herself around the uneven bars and backward off the balance beam in a series of moves that seemed almost death-defying. What mature woman could do what she did? Or would even try? Some gymnastics purists called Korbut "a circus act," but to the public she was a wonder.

Americans who didn't know a thing about gymnastics when the Munich Olympics began were arguing at the end whether or not Korbut deserved a perfect 10 for her work on the beam. When she stubbed a toe and was thrown off her routine in the uneven bars, America gasped. When she received a 7.5 for her performance in that event and cried, America cried with her. When she finished with three gold medals and a silver, well, that was gymnastics justice. America cheered.

In the Soviet Union, oddly, she was seen only as another part of the sports machine. Here, she was a star. After the Olympics ended, she toured the U.S. She went to Disneyland and posed with Mickey Mouse. She was presented with a red Chevrolet sports coupe that she drove once, as fast as possible, but wasn't allowed by Soviet sports officials to keep. She met President Richard Nixon at the White House. ("You're so tiny," the President said. "You're so big," Olga replied.) The Soviet foreign minister told her that she had done more in a few weeks to improve relations between her country and the U.S. than all of the diplomats had done in five years.

"I look at that little girl now and see that it was a shame she wasn't prepared for any of this," Korbut, now 39, says. "She couldn't comprehend what was happening. She was thinking, Why are these people bothering me? She met the queen of England. She spent an entire day with the prime minister on his boat on the Thames. She met the shah in Iran. She went everywhere."

The changes she had brought to her sport, alas, also were the seeds of her competitive doom. Little daredevil girls around the world marched from their television sets into the arms of gymnastics coaches in hopes of becoming the next Olga Korbut. By the time the 1976 Olympics rolled around in Montreal, the first Olga was 21, already too old for this new environment she had created. The star now was a 14-year-old, Nadia Comaneci of Romania. Nadia had watched Olga, and now, somewhere in West Virginia, a little girl named Mary Lou Retton was watching Nadia, and on and on it went. Olga was retired from competitive gymnastics within a year, married to a Russian rock singer within two.

"I am not the pigtailed girl anymore," Korbut says, "but I hold her dear to my heart. My personality is similar to that girl's. I feel much the same way she did. Maybe I am wiser, and sometimes I may scold that girl for what she used to do, but she is still in me." She now lives in Atlanta, of all places, where she coaches gymnastics and raises her teenage son and heads the Belarus American Child Health Foundation, which raises money for victims of the nuclear disaster in Chernobyl. Twenty-two years have passed since her grand moment—can it be?—and her country of birth and her adopted country are now shaky allies. She has been in the U.S. since 1991, part of the flow of Russians who have arrived since communism died and borders were opened.

The final flip has landed her where she was meant to be. —LEIGH MONTVILLE

Photograph by HEINZ KLUETMEIER, 1972

27 ARTHUR ASHE

THE LAST DAY TELLS WHY. FEBRUARY TWILIGHT, BONE-CUTTING COLD: Arthur Ashe lying still in a casket. The line of those waiting to say goodbye, 5,469 people long, uncoils down the steps of Virginia's Executive Mansion, past the statue of Stonewall Jackson and through the gate, winding down the street like a serpent freckled black and white. No one complains. The governor stands under a tree describing why Ashe was special, but this day tells better than words. As a young man Ashe left Richmond because of its racism. Here is Richmond now, welcoming him home.

Arthur Ashe took the slow train to eminence. He was the only black man to win the U.S. Open, in 1968, and the only one to win Wimbledon, in 1975. But his athletic talent was not the greatest of his gifts; he was never the tennis genius. Forget Laver, Borg, Tilden: Ashe's three Grand Slam titles in singles (he had another two in doubles) don't even stand up to the records of Sampras, Edberg and Courier. He was no political trailblazer, either. Muhammad Ali, John Carlos, Tommie Smith and Jackie Robinson all pushed the racial envelope further, faster, than the moderate Ashe, once leading Billie Jean King to crack, "*I'm* blacker than Arthur."

And yet by the time he died of AIDS-related pneumonia, in 1993, Ashe had achieved a greatness rare for an athlete: He was the first sportsman in memory to elicit the extraordinary tribute of lying in state, and you don't earn that by winning mere games. No, it was what Ashe did after his playing days—how he completed himself—that brought so many out into the Southern winter. Sport is fleeting. Wonderful careers spark, blaze and flame out in a decade; the typical champion spends his remaining 50 years in a kind of endless cast party, full of backslaps and soggy nostalgia. Not Ashe. He knew that his place in history gave him authority, a platform he could either sleep on or speak from for the rest of his days. He made his choice. It made him different.

"His death was a great loss," says Pam Shriver, former president of the Women's Tennis Association. "Tennis needs a spokesperson for those we don't naturally include. He filled that role for a long time." His way. Ashe didn't like being a symbol, because symbols don't breathe, aren't capable of surprise. He was never a mouthpiece for radical blacks, nor was he quite the polite, "good" black spokesman that middle-class whites considered him. He protested apartheid long before doing so was fashionable, was arrested for it in 1985. And he said that handling AIDS paled next to the pain of growing up black in America.

One of his happiest days came in the autumn before he died. Ashe had never felt comfortable with the outing of his disease, with being railroaded into becoming a spokesman in the war on AIDS. He liked to choose his fights. So in September '92 Ashe didn't allow the manner of his dying to decide his life. He took a plane to Washington, D.C., to be arrested again, this time for protesting U.S. immigration policy toward Haitians. "It does wonders for your outlook," Ashe said that night. "I'm sure it released a torrent of endorphins. Marching in a protest is a liberating experience. It's cathartic. It's one of the great moments you can have in your life."

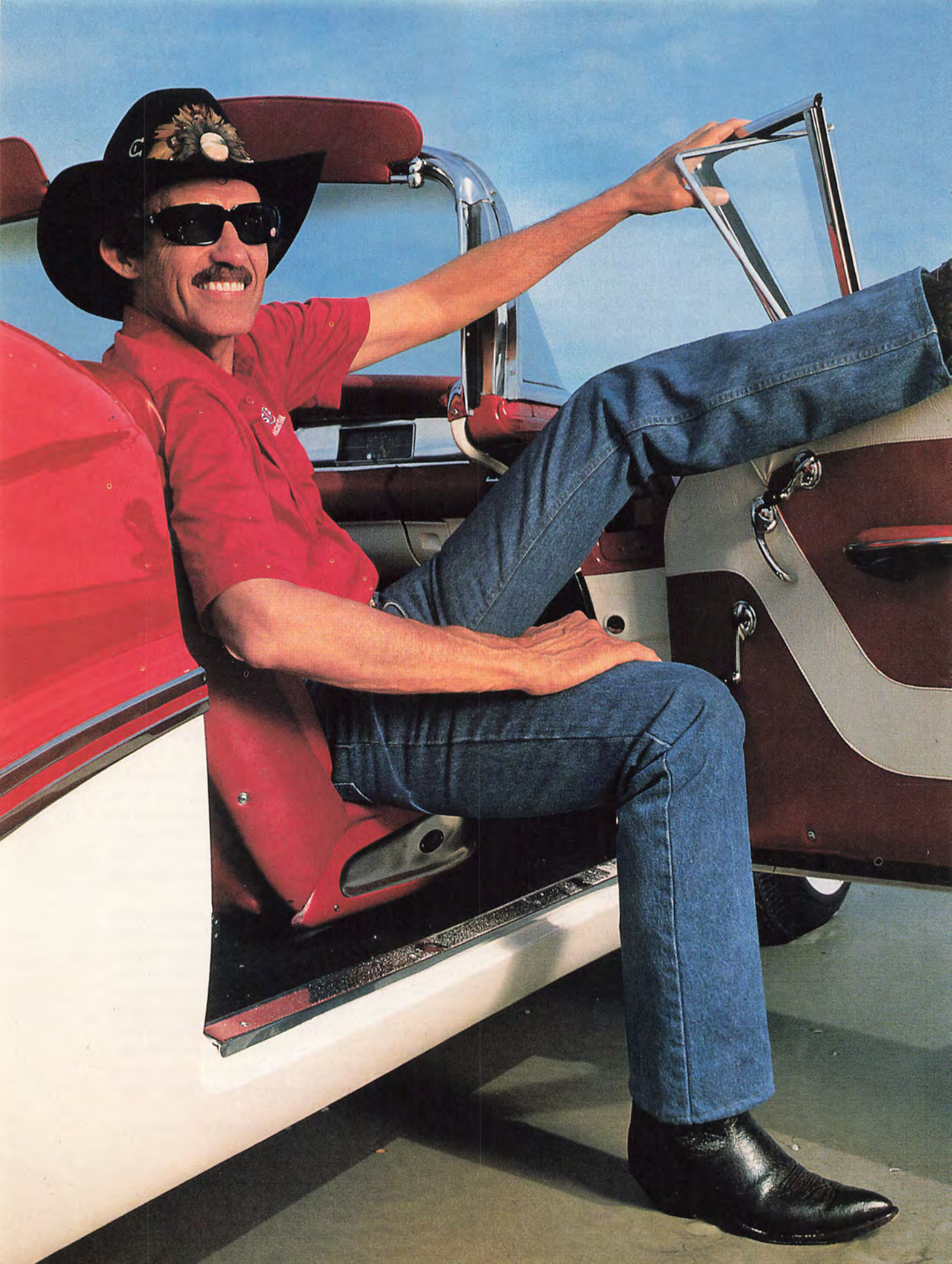
Sport is the American factory for children's heroes because kids play games; they can relate and be awed. But Ashe was the rarer kind of hero, an example of what to do when the playing stops, a role model for adults. He wrote the definitive history of the American black athlete, a three-volume work. He became a more confident voice of conscience. Despite his initial reticence, he became a fighter against AIDS, began a $5 million fund-raising campaign, questioned the lack of government funding for research. "Talking to audiences about AIDS has become in some respects the most important function of my life," Ashe wrote in his memoir *Days of Grace*.

Ashe was 49 when he died, and it is a measure of his life that he avoided the mere athlete's obituary. Eventually the tennis shrank next to the man; he put his game, all games, into their rightful place. He showed how, given the right application of perspective and brains, sports can be a bully pulpit. He showed how, at career's end, not to be pathetic.

At 22 Ashe said, "It's my life, and a hundred years from now nobody will know or care about it." But the last day tells otherwise.

—S.L. PRICE

Photograph by JOHN MARMARAS, 1971



28
RICHARD PETTY

THE BEST RACE DRIVERS HAVE A WAY OF TRANSFORMING THEIR CARS INTO extensions of themselves, fusing man and machine into a single organism, pistons and heart beating as one at 15,000 revolutions per minute. No driver ever got under the sheet-metal skin of a stock car better than Richard Petty, who revolutionized his sport, simonized his opposition and was canonized in his native South.

Petty didn't merely feel his race car around him, he began to *look* like it, too, taking on the brilliantine gloss of its bodywork, in the manner of people who start to resemble their pets. With the gleaming grille of his smile, the wraparound sunglasses he wore like a windshield, and the ever-present cheroot that preceded him like a hood ornament, it must have taken all his mechanics' willpower to resist putting Petty up on concrete blocks and draining the oil out of him.

Petty won exactly 200 NASCAR races from 1960 to '84 and then stopped winning, as if he had reached the summit of some great symmetrical mountain, the other side of which he slid down for the next 8½ seasons before he finally retired in 1992, at the age of 55. Happily, however, Petty's road to glory ended not with a whimper but with an eight-barrel bang: his final victory came at Daytona's Firecracker 400 in 1984 on the Fourth of July.

He won twice as many races on the NASCAR circuit as anyone else ever has, some of his victories coming one after another on Dixie dirt bullrings. "People kind of forget Richard got a lot of those wins of his when he was running on them old short tracks," rival driver Cale Yarborough once pointed out. And it's true. But it's also true that when King Richard didn't take the checkered flag, he was usually filling up the mirrors of the winner: He finished second 158 times.

In 1976 Petty and David Pearson collided in the Daytona 500, and Petty's Dodge ended up in the wall as Pearson limped to victory. It was only this little demolition derby that prevented Petty from winning the Daytona 500, NASCAR's signature race, eight times. It was at Daytona, in fact, that Petty became a legend. The Speedway opened in 1959, the year Petty was named NASCAR's Rookie of the Year, "so's if I was any good, I could grow along with the sport," Petty later reasoned. He came along just as the earliest NASCAR stars were fading—drivers like Junior Johnson and Fireball Roberts and Richard's daddy, Lee—and was among the first great stock car drivers who didn't sharpen their skills hauling moonshine out of Carolina hollers.

Stock car racing fans are the most intensely brand-loyal in all of sports, devoting themselves early in life to the fortunes of one driver. For most of a generation, that driver was Richard Petty, whose trademark racing groove typically meant leaving a blue streak—Petty Blue—on the retaining wall. He was once offered $50,000 to cover his blue paint job with a sponsor's colors, but he turned it down for fear that his fans wouldn't recognize him.

Petty once predicted, "One of these days when they have a race and I don't show up, then everybody will know I've retired." But when the time actually came, of course, he could scarcely bring himself to leave. For decades Petty had returned the kindness of strangers with regular open houses on the Petty Enterprises compound in Level Cross, N.C., where his fans could meet him and get an autograph. Often they would bring homemade quilts and samplers, or models of his race car. "They bring all this stuff here that they've made," said Laresa Davis, who worked at the Richard Petty Museum on the compound. "It's like they're offering it to their god."

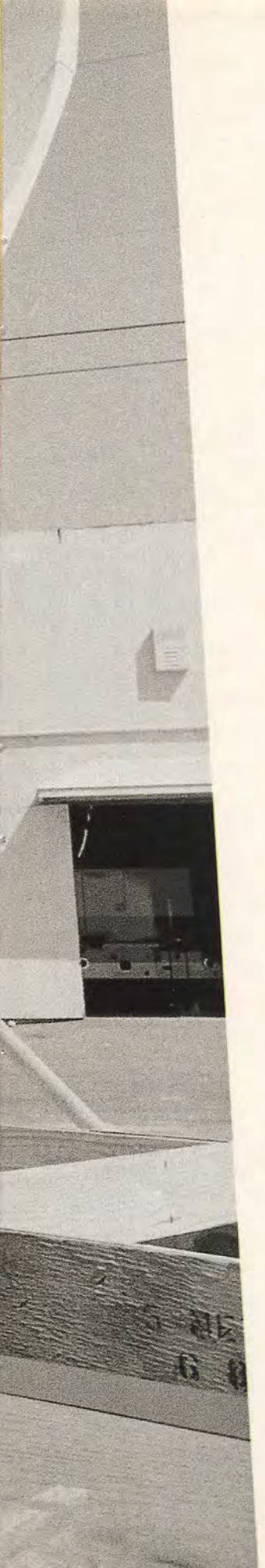
Whether god or king, he was all too prone to human frailties. In 1978 he had to have 40% of his stomach removed after suffering for years from ulcers. And after 35 years in the cockpit, the roar of his own engine had left him nearly deaf. In the final tally Petty gave racing far more than he took from it. In 1967, for instance, he won 27 of 48 races and earned only $130,275. Yet it was he who made stock car racing one of the biggest spectator sports in America, a cash cow so fatted with sponsors' dollars that the winner of this year's inaugural Brickyard 400, 23-year-old Jeff Gordon, took home a prize of $613,000. It should have been the King's ransom.

"We didn't have sponsors," Petty recalls. "We didn't have nobody to please. We didn't have nobody to tell us when to do right. We just done it."

— BRUCE NEWMAN

Photograph by THEO WESTENBERGER/GAMMA LIAISON, 1992

Scientific
Atlanta



29

BILL RASMUSSEN

YOU KNOW THE OLD SAYING, UNEMPLOYMENT IS THE MOTHER OF invention? Well, ESPN might never have come to our living rooms—all 8,760 hours of it per year—if the New England Whalers of the World Hockey Association hadn't fired their communications director and radio play-by-play man back in the spring of 1978. Poor 45-year-old Bill Rasmussen, out on his ear. But maybe you *need* to be unemployed to think up a network that would one day program Irish hurling against the World Series and would—someday—prosper by doing so. And maybe you've got to be a *little* cut off from real life to think you might get away with airing tape-delayed basketball 24 hours a day, along with rodeo and demolition derby.

Rasmussen, of course, wasn't looking to create ESPN or television history. All he was looking to do, during that downtime of his 16 years ago, was find a way to provide coverage of University of Connecticut basketball games through the dozen or so cable operators that were servicing Connecticut. When he talked to the cable operators, they kept mentioning some new distribution technology. To Rasmussen, who had spent his career working with little more than telephone lines, the idea of satellite transmission was fairly exotic. Being unemployed, Rasmussen had time to look into this. He called somebody at RCA headquarters and discovered that the company had been keeping a vastly underused satellite aloft for two years and was hungry for customers. "Of RCA's 23 active transponder sites," Rasmussen says, "there were six that were entirely available, and the others were in use no more than five hours a day."

Rasmussen had stumbled onto satellite technology just barely before everyone else. He discovered that he could shoot the UConn basketball games to as many cable operators in the state—all states, actually—that wanted them by using a satellite and paying by the hour. But as the satellite man explained the rates, Rasmussen noticed something else. One could rent space for five hours for $1,250 or—and this wasn't even on the rate card, so ridiculous a proposition was it—one could rent space for 24 hours for $1,143. So Rasmussen decided to try offering coast-to-coast, 24-hour-a-day programming simply because it was cheaper to do so than not.

But Rasmussen wasn't a pioneer yet. "You could say we had a little programming problem," he says. What, for example, would he broadcast all day long? He and his son Scott, then 22, were stuck in traffic one hot August afternoon in 1978, pondering this very question. They went back and forth, and as the traffic inched forward, tempers became frayed. "Put on football all day long for all I care," Scott said testily. This is cable's version of "Eureka, I have found it!" After negotiating with a reluctant NCAA, Rasmussen pretty much did put on college football all day long. Not only that, but he often played tapes of the same games again and again to fill out the airtime.

The other key element in the development of what was at first called the E.S.P. (Entertainment Sports Programming) Network was that RCA didn't want any money up front for the satellite rental. Rasmussen's company moved forward on the $9,000 he squeezed from his credit cards. The network began broadcasting in the fall of 1979 with limited airtime during the week and 24-hour coverage on weekends, and in September 1980 it began airing sports around the clock. In the years since, ESPN—it became that after its stationery came back from the printer with that letterhead—has negotiated increasingly important contracts with almost every league. The slo-pitch softball games have been replaced by major league baseball, Irish hurling by the NFL. ESPN now reaches more than 60 million homes and is a billion-dollar company.

Rasmussen didn't hang around long. The corporate turnovers (ESPN was first bought by Getty then ABC) that were necessary to keep the station alive during the money-losing days of its early growth period forced Rasmussen out by 1980. But he did all right. By the time he had cashed out, in 1984, the Rasmussen family interests were estimated to be worth $25 million. By then Bill Rasmussen was finally able to relax and do nothing—and with a clear conscience, or so he thought. He retired to Naples, Fla., and tried playing golf for days on end. Then he got to thinking. In 1990 he bought into a company that offers home-automation services. He swears it's the technology of the future.

—RICHARD HOFFER

Photograph by GEORGE LONG, 1979

30 PELÉ

IT IS NOT A LONG TIME, 27 MONTHS. NOT LONG ENOUGH TO SPREAD THE gospel of soccer to a nation that does not much care about it, to sway the doubters and charm the corporations and reconvert the immigrants who had discarded the sport as an Old World relic. On June 10, 1975, the North American Soccer League was playing to four-digit crowds in oversized stadiums and subsisting on agate type. That was the day 34-year-old Edson Arantes do Nascimento, known all over the planet as Pelé, came to New York to sign a three-year, $4.5 million deal with the Cosmos, telling a public baffled by his choice, "I looked and saw another mountain to climb."

It was enough time, 27 months, to scale another summit. With Pelé demonstrating the wondrous possibilities of soccer, the number of players registered with the U.S. Soccer Federation nearly quadrupled in that time period, from a little more than 100,000 to 400,000. With Pelé's Cosmos pursuing the 1977 NASL championship—an event whose climax five years before had drawn only 6,102 people and caused little more than a ripple in the local media—some 77,000 fans and 140 journalists attended a Cosmo playoff match at Giants Stadium. Said Franz Beckenbauer, the West German hero and a Cosmo teammate who had followed Pelé's lead to the U.S., "I have had many great moments in my career, but the greatest honor was to play with Pelé."

His nickname means nothing in any language but evokes images of genius and gentility in them all. Born in the poor Brazilian town of Três Corações, he began his professional career at 15, earning 5,000 cruzeiros (about $60) a month to play for the club team Santos. Two years later he was an international icon, having scored a hat trick in a World Cup semi against France and two more goals in Brazil's triumphant final against Sweden to win the first of his three Cups—an unequaled accomplishment. He was a prodigy who became prodigious. In a game in which 400 goals constitutes a mammoth career, Pelé scored 1,280 in 1,362 matches. He was called Gasoline for his energy, the Executioner for his finishing, the Black Pearl for his preciousness. When he was 19, *L'Equipe* of Paris wrote, "We have now seen the supreme work of art. Pelé infiltrated through his opponents like Novocain through a sick man's tissues."

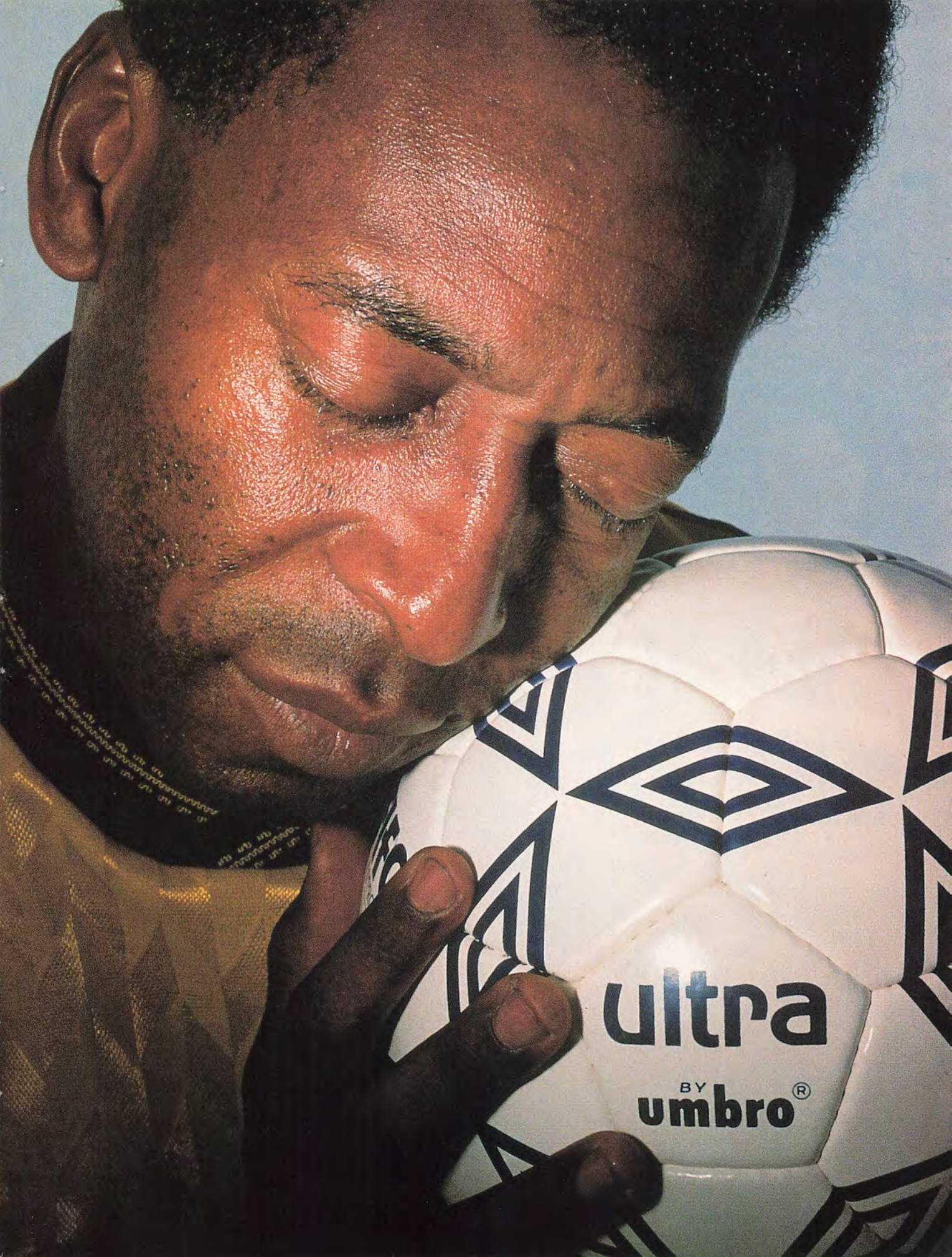
Over the years, Italian clubs tried to lure him with millions, but he wouldn't leave Santos because of loyalty and couldn't leave Brazil because of law. In 1961 President Jânio Quadros had Pelé declared a national treasure. His aura both as player and as person prompted the warring parties in the Nigeria-Biafra conflict to institute a two-day cease-fire when he made an appearance there in 1968. On Pelé's retirement, J.B. Pinheiro, Brazil's ambassador to the U.N., said Pelé had "spent 22 years playing soccer, and in that time he has done more for goodwill and friendship than all of the ambassadors ever appointed."

On Oct. 1, 1977, Pelé's mission in the NASL ended. His last match, an exhibition game between the Cosmos and Santos, was sold out six weeks beforehand, covered by 650 journalists and broadcast in 38 nations. Muhammad Ali embraced him in the locker room before the match and said, "Now there are two of the greatest." In a speech to dignitaries, celebrities and more than 75,000 fans, Pelé urged his audience to pay attention to the children of the world. At his request, the assemblage shouted, "Love! Love! Love!" Then he went out and played the first half for the Cosmos—scoring a goal on a rocket from 30 yards out—and the second half for Santos.

Pelé has continued to work for children's causes and for UNICEF. "It seems that God brought me to Earth with a mission," he wrote in *The New York Times* after the '77 season, "to unite people, never to separate them." All the while he has traveled the globe on behalf of his sport, and in 1983 he began an ultimately successful lobbying campaign with soccer's pooh-bahs to award the World Cup to the U.S.

Now 53, Pelé has also become quite rich. He earns an estimated $30 million a year from endorsements and his various businesses. His is a well-rounded grandeur. "Every kid around the world who plays soccer wants to be Pelé," he once said. "I have a great responsibility to show them not just how to be like a soccer player, but how to be like a man." — HANK HERSCH

Photograph by WALTER IOOSS JR., 1988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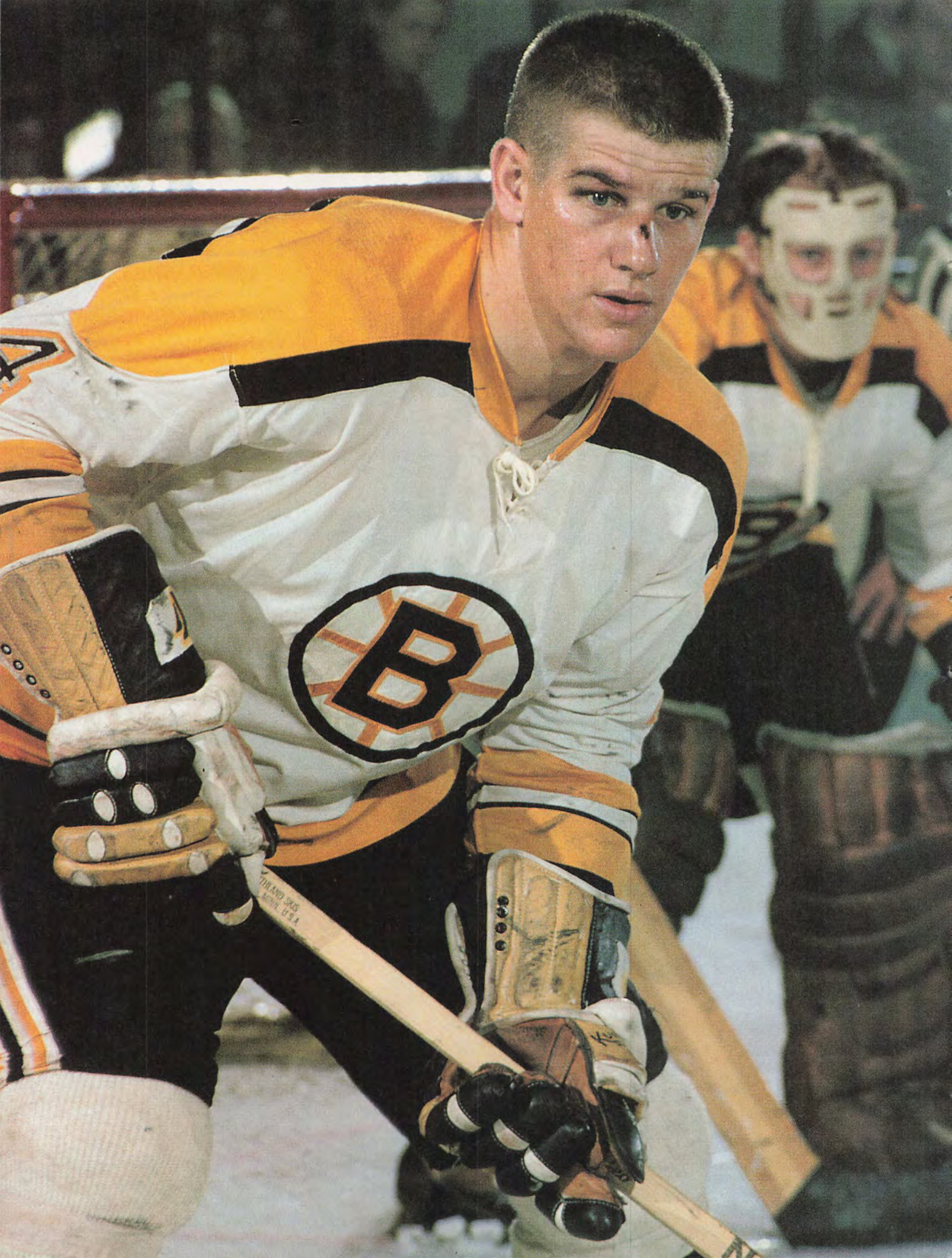


31

BOBBY ORR

THE GREAT ONES ALL BEAR A MARK OF ORIGINALITY, BUT BOBBY ORR'S mark on hockey, too brief in the etching, may have been the most distinctive of any player's in the past 40 years. He changed the sport by redefining the parameters of his position. A defenseman, as interpreted by Orr, became both a defender and an aggressor, both a protector and a producer. Orr was much more than an opportunist: He *created* opportunities. Like a quarterback who can run or a point guard who will drive to the basket, Orr directed the attack, sometimes from the rear, sometimes from the front line. And he played with such daily abandon that it was as if he knew, even as a teenager, that time was soon to run out on his career.

Was Orr the best ever? Not many who saw him play would dispute it. Certainly his nine years in the NHL before his left knee gave out were as electrifying a stretch as has ever been put together by a hockey player; during that period he changed the very nature of the game.

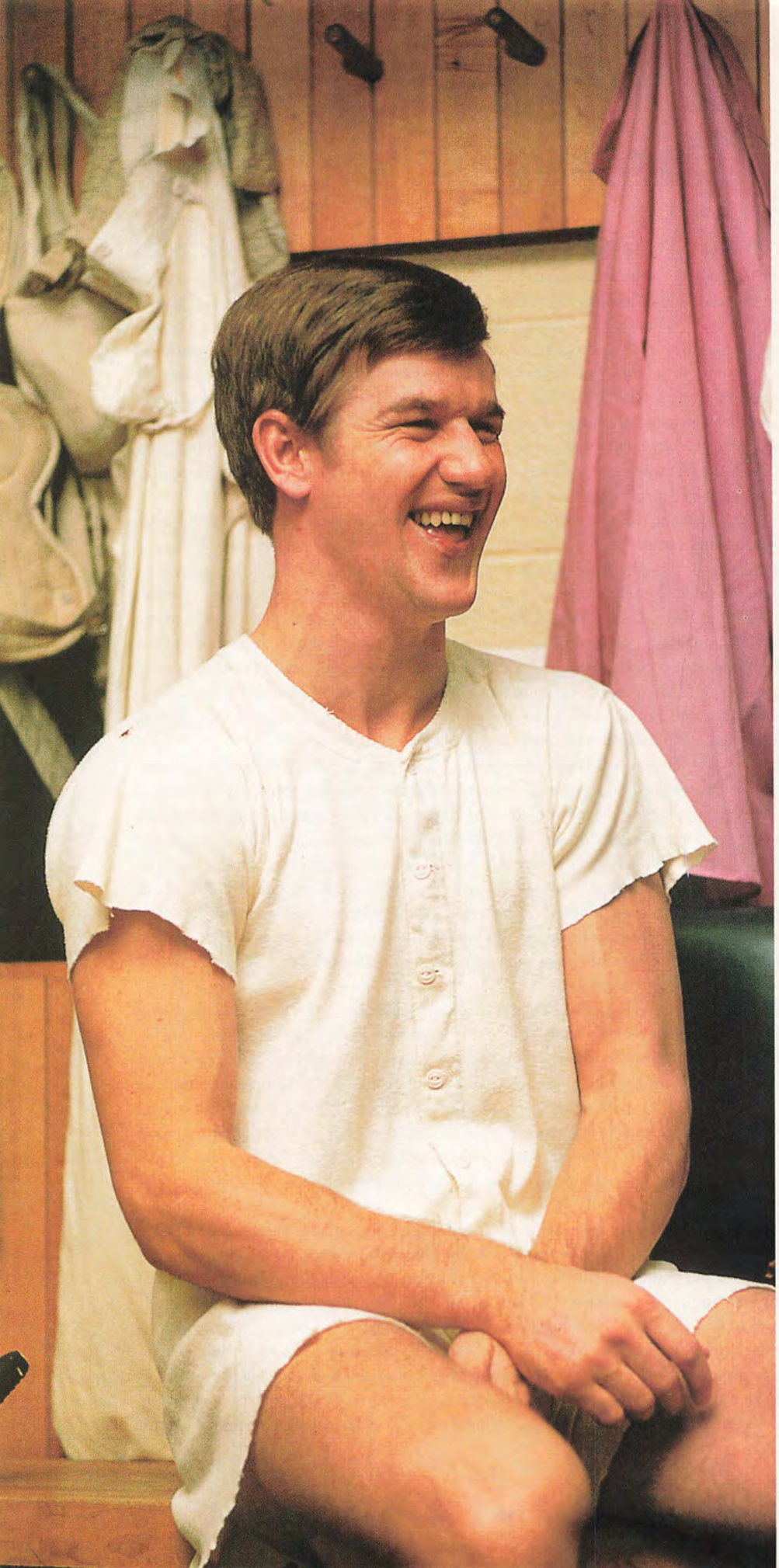
Before Orr broke into the league in 1966 as a much-heralded, crew-cutted 18-year-old from Parry Sound, Ont., defensemen were pretty much expected to play defense. They seldom strayed out of position. They broke up rushes, minded the front of the net and helped clear the puck from the defensive zone. The offense was in the hands of the forwards. Every once in a while there would be a blue-liner—Doug Harvey, Pierre Pilote, Red Kelly—who could also quarterback the power play, chalking up 40 or 50 assists in a season. But with the curved stick and the slap shot in their infancy, precious few of those guys could shoot the puck with the velocity and accuracy to become a scoring threat. And none would be so brazenly foolish as to lead a rush from end to end. That was the domain of the great forwards: the Bobby Hulls, Gordie Howes and Maurice Richards, the players the fans came to see. Then came Orr.

At 5′ 11″, 175 pounds, he was solid but not imposing. But, lord, he played the game with creative unconstraint. Orr was fast, blessed with instant acceleration, gaining top speed in three or four strides. Then he might glide, legs wide, until he broke with breathtaking quickness either left or right before passing or shooting, his shot blistering, low and accurate. Or he could put forth another quick spurt, splitting the defense—he was tough and fearless and loved to drive to the net. Or he might execute his trademark spinorama move in which he pivoted 360 degrees at mid-ice, like one of those figures in a board hockey game, then wheeled away from his pursuers, who trailed behind in various stages of undress. He didn't have to stickhandle; his quick feet did the stickhandling for him. His legs and head fakes kept his defenders off balance. Orr was simply the quickest, most mobile man on the ice.

It would have been insane to shackle such a player to the blue line, and the Boston Bruins, who had missed the playoffs seven years in a row before Orr's arrival—and for whom Orr would play the first 10 of his 12 NHL seasons—allowed their young genius free rein. He broke every positioning rule in the book. He controlled the game from his defensive slot as no one has before or since. And he seemed to always have the puck. While killing penalties, he sometimes played keepaway by himself for half a minute or more. He gobbled up every puck the opponents were so unwise as to dump in and chase. "Whenever you do that, you can just kiss the puck goodbye," Chicago Black Hawk coach Billy Reay once said. "That's another part of the game Orr has spoiled for everybody."

Orr thought nothing of rushing the puck end to end, trying to generate any kind of scoring chance. Temporarily out of position, he would use his speed to get back on defense. He was caught up-ice with some regularity, but far more often it was the opponents who found themselves outnumbered and outgunned. Orr had seasons of 33, 37 and 46 goals—unheard-of totals for a defenseman in that era. (The last defenseman before Orr to have scored 20 goals in a season was Flash Hollett of the Detroit Red Wings, in 1944–45.) Orr was not only the first defenseman but also the first *player* to total more than 100 assists in a season, and he twice led the league in scoring—still the only defenseman ever to have done so even once. "Hockey is a team game, right?" asked New York Ranger forward Rod Gilbert in 1970, after a six-game playoff series

Photograph by TONY TRIOLO, 1967



against the Bruins in which Orr scored seven goals. "One man is not supposed to beat a whole team."

But Orr, who took the Bruins to Stanley Cup titles in 1970 and '72, was a consummate team player, obsessed with being one of the guys, complete and well-rounded in the best traditions of an NHL defenseman. Throughout his career he blocked shots with the tenacity of a rookie. He bodychecked with ferocity. He fought the toughest of the tough, willingly dropping his gloves to do so. Off the ice he was modest and shunned publicity. His teammates worshiped him. Fans flocked to see him play.

It was too good to last, of course. He had played too hard on knees too fragile. Six operations on his left knee alone effectively ended Orr's career at the age of 27 and officially ended it at the age of 30 when Orr retired after three injury-plagued seasons, one with the Bruins, two with the Black Hawks. But by then his legacy had long been established. He had been voted the league's top defenseman eight years in a row, its MVP three times, its playoff MVP twice. And his influence on young hockey players worldwide is incalculable. Certainly every young defenseman in North America was drawn to this new brand of exciting, wide-open, aggressive hockey. Another dimension had been added to the game—a generation of offensive defensemen was born.

Few of them came close to playing as Orr had, but some who did—Brad Park, Denis Potvin, Paul Coffey, Ray Bourque, Brian Leetch—became the dominant players at their position. And all took their lead from number 4, Robert Gordon Orr. —E.M. SWIFT

Photograph by
JOHN ZIMMERMAN/LIFE, 1970

Year
after
year.
sport
after
sport.
game
after
game.
athlete
after
athlete.
thirst
after
thirst.
It's
gotta
be

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32 SUGAR RAY LEONARD

WHEN SUGAR RAY LEONARD LEFT MONTREAL THAT SUMMER DAY IN 1976, clutching a gold medal hard won in the Olympics, the 21-year-old champion announced the first of what would turn out to be four retirements with an utterance as deft as his moves in the ring. "My journey has ended," Leonard said. "My dream is fulfilled." He was off to college.

The world has long since learned that no fighter under 40 can be trusted on such occasions, and if Leonard, at the time, believed what he was saying, no one paying attention really did. Five U.S. boxers had won gold medals at those games, and on a team suddenly feted as America's darlings, Leonard was the most attractive of all. He had fought with a picture of his three-year-old son, Ray Jr., taped to his sneaker and had a smile that fizzed like 7-Up. It was Ray who had the happy feet, the taste for malice, the fire served with a side of ice.

At this most pivotal moment of his life, as his impulse toward higher education was being overcome by the gravity of lower gymnasia, Leonard became the world's luckiest young man. He met Mike Trainer, a gnomic Maryland attorney who turned out to be as savvy and unyielding a negotiator as Leonard was a fighter. If the object of boxing is to make money *and* history, Leonard was no doubt the most sagely handled fighter of all time. From Ray's first pro fight, in 1977, when he earned $40,000 for beating Luis (the Bull) Vega, Trainer played his career like a violin, calculating what Leonard's appeal meant to an event and then insisting on that number: no Sugar Ray, no big money. For himself, Trainer never took a third of Leonard's purses, the usual cut for a manager. Instead, for nearly the first three years, he charged $65 an hour, less than his standard legal fee. It was not until 1979 that Trainer began accepting what Leonard offered from the ever larger pies.

By his retirement—his last one—in February 1991, Leonard had become the first fighter to win titles in five divisions (every weight class from welter on up to light heavy) as well as the first fighter to earn $100 million in purses. Has any other fighter ever departed so rich, so fulfilled, and in all ways so unscarred? His career is the paradigm for the sport.

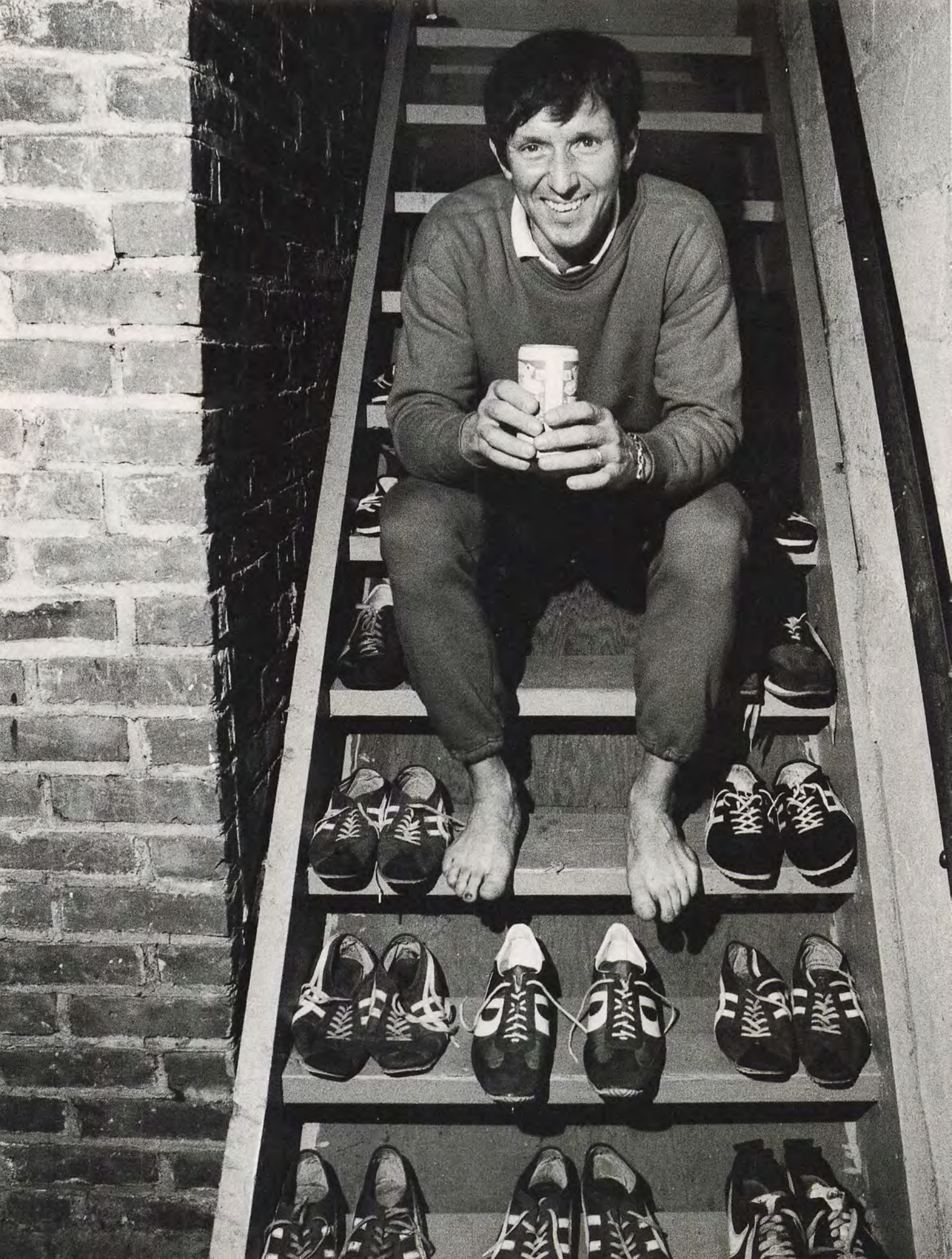
Forget for now the pretty stuff, the intimations of a miniature Ali, the razzle unto dazzle, the choirboy smile. Forget all that and remember this: In the three most defining moments of his ring career, Leonard was among the toughest, most resilient and most implacable warriors ever to pull on gloves. Confronted by the maniacal intensity of Roberto Durán's beastly, two-fisted attack in their first fight, on June 20, 1980, most men would have buckled and broke. Leonard found the skill to survive and the will to turn the fight his way in the last few rounds. He lost the decision, but it was there, for the first time, that Leonard revealed the weight of his fortitude. Thomas Hearns began collapsing under it in the 13th round of their fight on Sept. 16, 1981, when Leonard, behind on all cards and his left eye swollen shut, crashed a right to Hearns's temple and then, in an exultant burst of fury, struck him with 25 straight punches. In the 14th round the demonic Leonard was clubbing Hearns with blow upon blow when the referee finally waved him away.

In his April 6, 1987, fight against middleweight champion Marvin Hagler, Leonard summoned his every skill to pull off one of the greatest upsets in ring history. He had no business being there in the first place. Aside from one forgettable bout against an unknown fighter in 1984, Leonard had not fought in five years and 50 days, and here he was essaying to take the middleweight title from one of the fiercest punchers in the division's history, a man who had not lost in 11 years. However you may have scored it that night—and many thought that Hagler won—Leonard's was a remarkable performance, an exercise in guile, nerve, endurance and superior athleticism. In the final round, under desperate pressure, Leonard twice appeared doomed on the ropes and twice flurried out of trouble, to the roars of what had begun as a Hagler crowd, and when it was over, he fell exhausted to his knees—where Hagler could not put him—and had to be carried back to his corner.

Almost four years later, on Feb. 9, 1991, Terry Norris clubbed Leonard into retirement. His lips cut raw, his eyes puffy, Sugar Ray said, "I am not of the '90s." Indeed, he was not. Leonard was for all time.

— WILLIAM NACK

Photograph by BRIAN LANKER, 1979



33
JIM FIXX

HIS NAME ITSELF SPOKE OF POSITIVE CHANGE, OF TINKERING FOR THE better, but the change that Jim Fixx wrought with the 1977 publication of *The Complete Book of Running* was revolutionary. He gave us back our bodies—to improve, to enjoy, to fret over. Sweat was suddenly sexy, and cardiovascular fitness was something you strived for or felt guilty for ignoring. "Running became mainstream," says Ryan Lamppa, of the Road Running Information Center in Santa Barbara, Calif. "Runners weren't freaks on the side of the road anymore."

The sport's growth was staggering. By no coincidence 1978 was the first year that the number of people finishing marathons in the U.S. topped 100,000, and that number has grown steadily, reaching 301,500 last year. Of course, Fixx was not the only fomenter of this revolution. Frank Shorter had given it a kick start when he won the '72 Olympic marathon in Munich, and wide-eyed little Bill Rodgers helped it along with four wins apiece at the Boston and New York City marathons between '75 and '80. So did Alberto Salazar, when he set a world record in the '81 New York City Marathon, a race that visionary Fred Lebow had turned into a mass spectacle. The late Dr. George Sheehan was the movement's craggy philosopher, and Dr. Ken Cooper had given it a physiological grounding in *Aerobics*, which was published in 1968 and rediscovered by Fixx.

Fixx, though, was neither a doctor nor a great athlete. He was a popularizer with an uncanny sense of timing. He titled his book's foreword "On the Subversive Nature of This Book." If you believed him, then you believed that running enhanced every human activity: Runners slept better (that made sense), digested their food better and were calmer than nonrunners. Even sex was better for runners. And Fixx delivered this gospel in strong, straightforward prose, rich in anecdotal evidence. *The Complete Book of Running* was published on Oct. 23, 1977—to coincide with the running of the New York City Marathon—and climbed onto the best-seller list a few weeks later. It reached No. 1 on Feb. 26, 1978, and was there for a total of 11 weeks. It has now sold 993,000 copies—all in hardback—making it the most successful running book ever published.

One of the most appealing things about the book's message was its messenger. "In a sense, Jim was Everyman," says George Hirsch, publisher of *Runner's World* magazine and a longtime friend of Fixx's. "He was the overweight two-pack-a-day smoker. Running literally changed his life. Jim probably bought himself 10 years [by becoming a runner]. And he was able to translate that change to the mass of people." Fixx's "before" picture was not pretty. He was 32 when he took up running in 1969; he had worked for years in Manhattan as a magazine editor, and as he noted in his foreword, "one of my more pleasant duties was to entertain authors at lunches and dinners." Because the only exercise Fixx got was playing a "respectable if roly-poly game of tennis" on weekends, his weight had climbed from 170, when he was in his teens, to 214 pounds. He might never have discovered his calling had he not pulled a muscle in his right calf playing tennis. He took up jogging to strengthen it and soon was hooked. His first race was a local five-miler in Connecticut. He went on to run the Boston Marathon eight times, clocking his best time of 3:15:54 in 1975. Indeed, the great set of legs on the book's cover belonged to its author.

Fixx's influence extends far beyond running. The fitness industry is a vast empire: Lite beer and Lycra tights, StairMasters and aerobics classes, fear of cholesterol and fascination with whole grains—all are symptoms of our interest in cardiovascular health. And though lately there has been a rush to proclaim the running boom over in the U.S., the number of people running more than 100 days a year has held steady at about nine million.

One thing Fixx was careful not to promise readers in *The Complete Book of Running* was a longer life. When he died in 1984 of a heart attack, while running along a country road in Vermont, the industry he had helped create scrambled to explain this apparent refutation of his life's work. Fixx was only 52 years old. He was also, it turned out, a prime candidate for regular stress testing: His father had suffered his first heart attack at the age of 36 and had died at 43; and in the weeks before his death, Fixx himself had ignored chest pains. In the end Fixx taught us not how to make our lives longer—only how to make them better. — MERRELL NODEN

Photograph by KEN REGAN / CAMERA 5, 1978

34
NOLAN RYAN

ONE NIGHT IN 1980 IN THE HOUSTON ASTRODOME, NOLAN RYAN WAS throwing his usual unhittable heat for the Astros. It was late in the game, and the Montreal pitcher was due up at the plate. In the visitors' dugout, three of the Expos' pinch-hitting candidates—Tommy Hutton, Jerry White and Roland Office—slunk quietly to the end of the dugout, hoping that manager Dick Williams wouldn't notice them. Williams gazed down his bench, spied Hutton and ordered him to grab a bat. Office and White burst out laughing.

That's Hutton's favorite Nolan Ryan story. Everyone who faced the legendary fastballer has his own memorable tale of woe. "How did I do against him? Terrible," says Gene Tenace, now a Toronto Blue Jay coach, 2 for 31 lifetime against Ryan. "I got this one hit off him—it was an accident. I told him that: *Mister Ryan*, it was an accident!"

Though few would deem Ryan the greatest pitcher ever, he is undeniably the greatest strikeout pitcher ever. And, statistically at least, he was the hardest pitcher to hit; the career batting average against him was .204, the major league's alltime lowest for a pitcher with at least 1,500 innings. A genetic miracle, Ryan for nearly 30 years threw a baseball as hard as any man who ever lived. And in his long heyday he was the game's most entertaining pitcher to watch: Every time he went to the mound there was the very real chance of a no-hitter.

His achievements are staggering: 5,714 strikeouts (more than Sandy Koufax and Bob Gibson combined), 324 wins, seven no-hitters and 12 one-hitters. But it was more than numbers that have made Ryan a legend. In this era of the pampered and petulant player, he was the last of the game's old-style gentlemen, a willing role model who maintained his dignity through 27 major league seasons. He suffered through tough times and endured his share of criticism, but he didn't make excuses or blast management or berate reporters or blow past kids on his way to the bus.

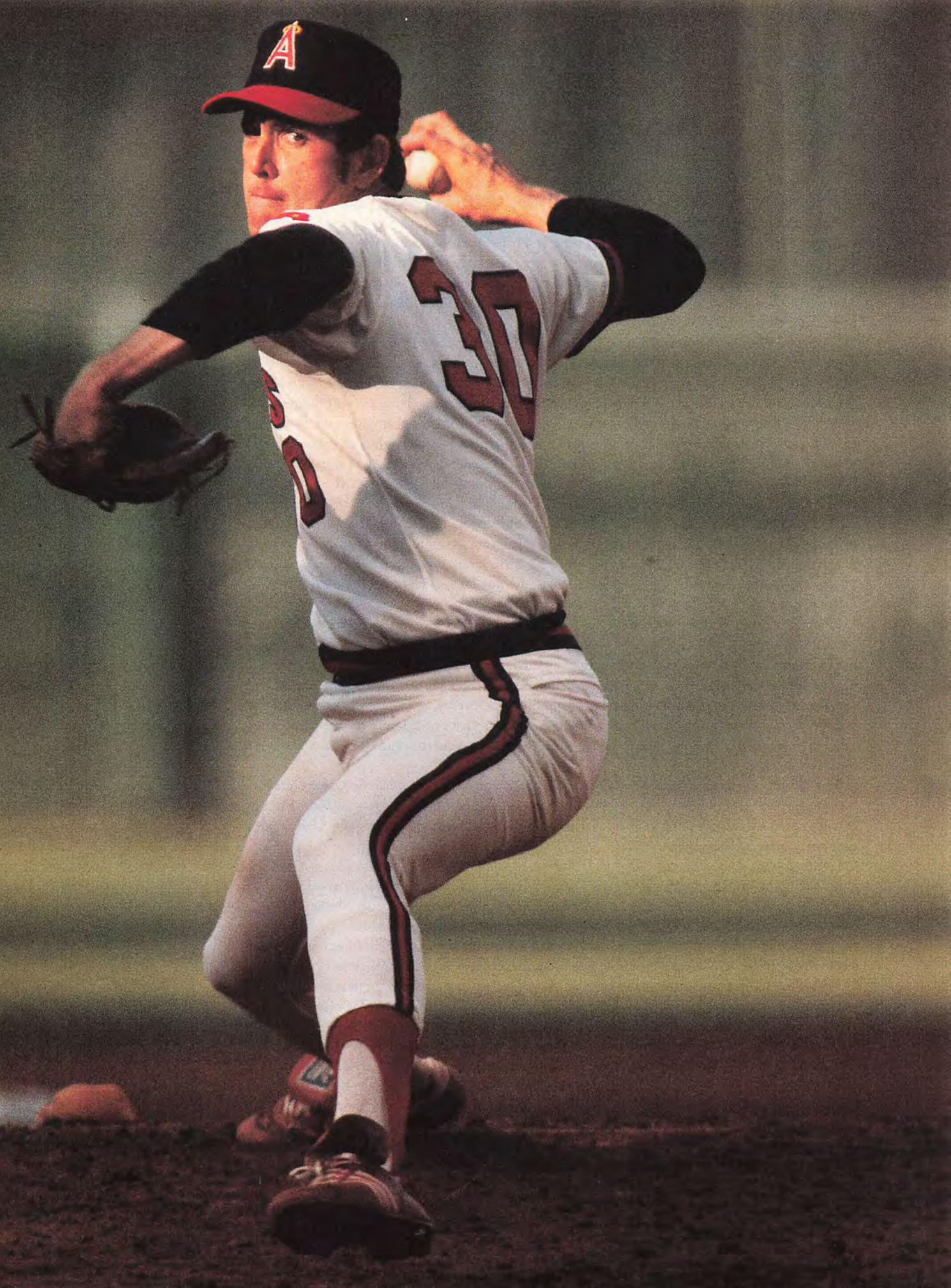
It has been suggested that the Cy Young Award be changed to the Nolan Ryan Award—and yet Ryan never won it. Indeed, even now there are critics who brand him a mere .500 pitcher (he lost 292 games) who piled up a lot of K's. He told a teammate in the early '70s that he was going to strike out more hitters than anyone who ever lived. Going for strikeouts, detractors say, cost him wins. He was a 20-game winner just twice (21 in '73 and 22 in '74, with the California Angels), and in both those seasons he lost 16; in fact, he never finished more than six games over .500 in a season. Indeed, had Ryan retired after leaving the Astros via free agency following the 1988 season, he would have been on the Hall of Fame bubble. But during his five seasons with the Texas Rangers, he recorded his 5,000th strikeout, threw his last two no-hitters and won his 300th game, making him a lock for Cooperstown. It was in those final seasons that Nolan Ryan grew larger than life: an aging superman with an unmatched work ethic, and the most unpretentious star in an increasingly pretentious game. Never was the nature of his appeal more evident than on May 1, 1991. On that evening Oakland's Rickey Henderson became baseball's alltime stolen base leader, after which he proclaimed, "I'm the greatest." That same night Ryan threw his seventh no-hitter, after which he rode the exercise bike for his usual hour, while his family waited patiently outside.

Ryan still lives in Alvin, Texas, the small town where he was raised. His father worked for an oil company but delivered the *Houston Post* every morning, often with Nolan at his side. "Dad worked two jobs to put four girls through college," Ryan has said. "I know he didn't want to get up at one in the morning, but that's what he had to do, so he did it. I think that's the way I am."

He has almost surely signed more autographs than any other ballplayer, yet has never charged for one. In the late stages of his career, opposing players asked for his signature so often that in 1993 a sign had to be posted in the visiting clubhouse at Arlington Stadium indicating that Ryan would be able to sign only before the first game of each series. It is the admiration of his peers that stands as the highest tribute. Former Toronto third baseman Rance Mulliniks once pondered what the world would be like if everyone was like Nolan Ryan. "Everyone would love each other," he said. "And no one would get a hit."

— TIM KURKJIAN

Photograph by PETER READ MILLER, 1979



35

PEGGY FLEMING

WHEN 19-YEAR-OLD PEGGY FLEMING GLIDED INTO THE ADORING embrace of the American public by winning the gold medal at the 1968 Olympics in Grenoble, she launched figure skating's modern era. Pretty and balletic, elegant and stylish, Fleming took a staid sport that was shackled by its inscrutable compulsory figures and arcane scoring system and, with television as her ally, made it marvelously glamorous. Ever since, certainly to North Americans, figure skating has been the marquee sport of the Winter Games and an increasingly popular staple of prime-time television.

Seven years before Fleming captured the hearts of her American audience, the entire U.S. national figure skating team, including six coaches, was killed in a plane crash on its way to the 1961 world championships in Prague. Fleming—whose coach, Will Kipp, was on the flight—was 12 at the time. Three years later, her path unblocked by more experienced skaters and the political clout they often wielded, Fleming became the youngest U.S. women's champion ever. It was her first of five straight national titles. In 1966, at 17, she also won the first of her three consecutive world championships. By the time the world tuned in to Grenoble, Fleming was already the darling of the international press. Referred to by scribes as "doe-eyed," "fragile," "the leggy wisp" and "America's shy Bambi," Fleming built up such a huge lead in the compulsories, which then accounted for 60% of the scoring, that everyone else was skating for second. Though she faltered in the free skating, she became the sole U.S. gold medalist at Grenoble. With the Olympics being televised live for the first time, Fleming was propelled to a level of popularity and fame unknown by any previous American figure skating champion—not Dick Button or Tenley Albright or Carol Heiss.

Fleming became the original American ice princess, incongruously so, since she was not, by nature, glamorous. Off the ice she was small-town America through and through: unpretentious, hardworking, middle-class, level-headed. But she carried herself like a star during performances. On the ice she was stylish in a manner more reminiscent of ballet dancing than figure skating, and she was inoffensively sexy, teeming with femininity and energy. All these charms translated beautifully over the picture tube. "With some skaters there's a lot of fuss and feathers, but nothing is happening," Dick Button once said. "With Peggy there's no fuss and feathers, and a great deal is happening."

Her skating appeared effortless, and therein lay its magic. She seemed to flow from one element to the next, seamlessly, weightlessly, like something blown about by the wind. No skater in any era could surpass Fleming's lyrical elegance on the ice. Twenty-six years later, she remains the sport's artistic bellwether.

Figure skating soared on the wings of its new star, something that had last happened in the '30s, when Norway's Sonja Henie took her three Olympic gold medals to Hollywood. Fleming was invited to the White House twice—before such invitations became routine. She appeared on magazine covers and made five TV specials, including widely acclaimed broadcast performances from the Soviet Union and China, and has remained in the public eye through occasional stints as a commentator for ABC, a lingering star who seems never to wear out her welcome.

Who knows how many girls worldwide got into figure skating after having first been exposed to the sport by Fleming? She pulled U.S. skating back to its feet after the 1961 tragedy, jump-starting a program that for the next 26 years produced an unbroken string of U.S. women stars, from Janet Lynn to Dorothy Hamill to Linda Fratianne to Rosalynn Sumners to Elaine Zayak to Tiffany Chin to Debi Thomas to Jill Trenary to Kristi Yamaguchi to Nancy Kerrigan.

Women's Olympic figure skating now draws Super Bowl numbers on television. And even bruised as it was by the tawdry Tonya Harding sideshow of last winter, the sport continues to evolve as compelling competition, ideal for TV and captivating for its ever-growing audience. Why figure skating? What button is it pushing in the American public? Perhaps it's as simple as this: Everyone's hoping to catch a glimpse of the next Peggy Fleming. — E.M. SWIFT

Photograph by JOHN ZIMMERMAN, 1968

36
DON KING

HE IS A STORM ON THE HORIZON AS HE APPROACHES. LOCAL WEATHERMEN should have a symbol for boxing impresario Don King, maybe a little circle with electric-shock hair sticking from the top. Warning! Don King is in the neighborhood! Close all doors! Fasten all windows! Find your thesaurus and check your wallet! He is a brass band on parade and a cable-access preacher in the throes of revelation, and he is wind and rain and bluster and—if you believe some of the things that have been said about him—a thief in the night.

Uh-oh. Here he is. Check him out. This is from an eight-page SI story in December 1990 that was devoted strictly to the subject of his famous hair. Alert! Alert! "The truth is that my hair is an aura from God," King explains. "Until 1971 it was kinky and nappy and burry, like any other black man's. Then one night I was in bed with my lovely wife, Henrietta, when suddenly my head got to rumbling. It felt like a volcanic eruption. Ping! Ping! Ping! . . . All them curls were straightening out and straightening up. Each strand stood erect, pristine and beautiful, reaching for the heavens on its own individual stimulation. . . . Being a religious person like myself, I looked up the Scriptures and found God did it to me. I thought, Whaddya know, I've been chosen by God! He made every shank a citadel." Whew. . . .

From the time he arrived full-bore on the boxing landscape as the promoter of the "Rumble in the Jungle" between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman in Zaire in 1974, followed a year later by the epic "Thrilla in Manila" between Ali and Joe Frazier, King has manipulated the pieces of his sport with Falstaffian flamboyance. Equal parts W.C. Fields, Jimmy Hoffa and Amos 'n' Andy, with more than a touch of Central American dictator, he sometimes has made boxing his own puppet show, with embarrassingly visible wires stretching from his heavily ringed fingers.

While movement has been glacial in achieving minority ownership in all other sports, King has been, for better or worse, boxing's chief executive, a black man taking the money to the bank. Who hasn't he promoted? He was a player in Ali's biggest fights. His face is still in the background of all pictures of Mike Tyson. Roberto Durán. Julio César Chávez. Ken Norton. Larry Holmes. King has been involved with all of them. In 1982 he was the promoter for 12 world champions; in 1983 he staged 22 world-championship bouts. He helped bring boxing to the cable and pay-per-view markets, generating millions of dollars. He has controlled, controlled, controlled. "Did you ever work for him?" a newcomer to boxing once asked Holmes. "Hah," Holmes replied. "For 12 years my lips were surgically attached to his ass."

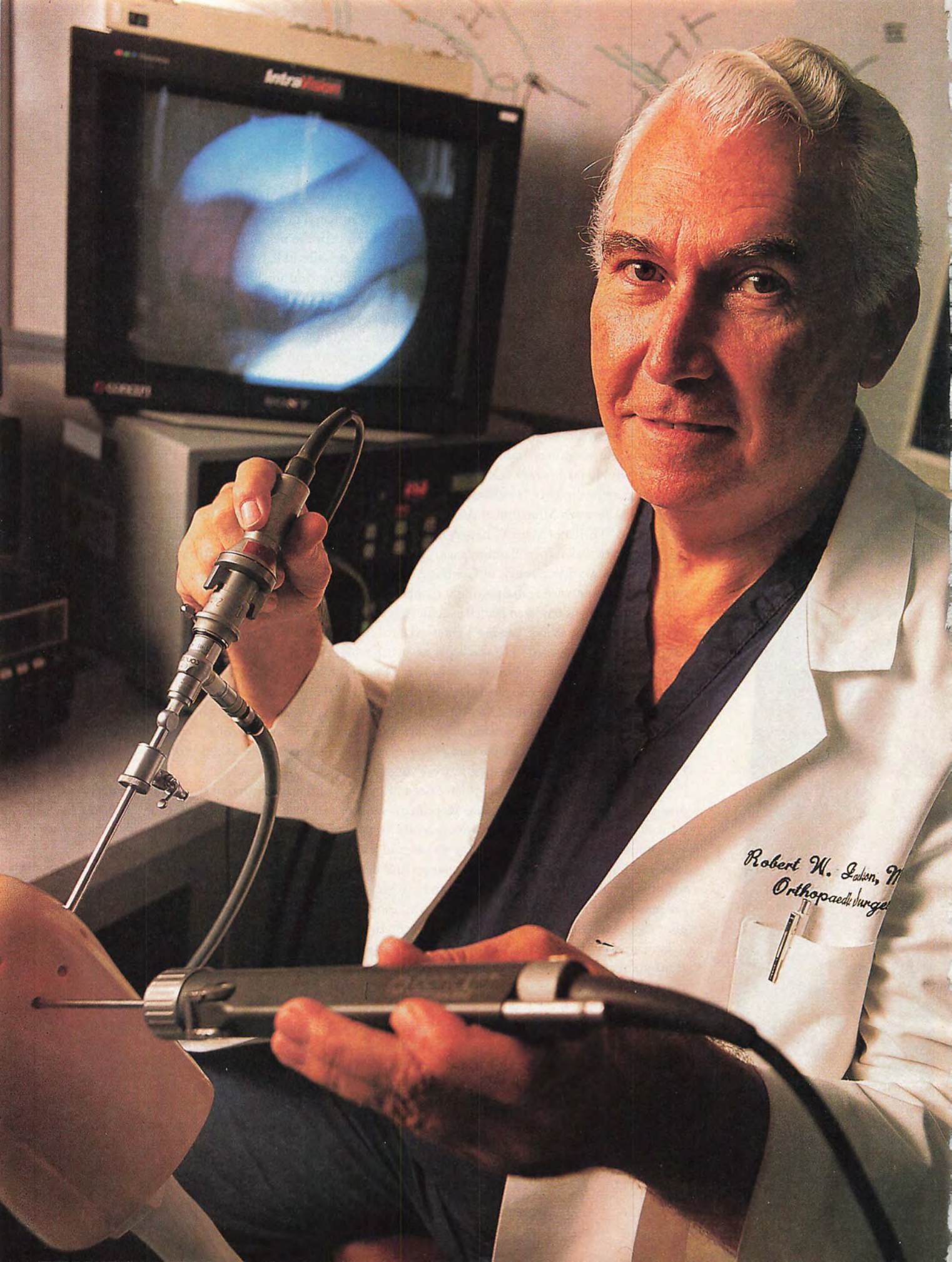
Various law-enforcement groups have been more than a little interested in King's many enterprises, and many of his contractual agreements have ended with suits, countersuits and allegations of missing sums of money. Most recently he was indicted on nine counts of wire and insurance fraud; if convicted he could face 45 years in jail and $2.25 million in fines. But so far in his career in boxing he has survived all charges and investigations. These controversies—together with his earlier career as a numbers runner in Cleveland, culminating in a four-year prison stay for manslaughter—have become part of his "only in America" declarations, which tell how a poor child from the ghetto in Cleveland grew up to lunch with kings and potentates.

In many ways he is a return to the old-time sports promoter, surviving on his wiles and personal magnetism, so different from today's corporate team owners. He is a black P.T. Barnum, 63 years old, finding those suckers who are born faster than every minute now, taking sometimes questionable attractions and dressing them in silks and klieg lights, selling them to the public in new ways, making sure the contracts are signed and that they contain certain profitable clauses in the fine print. A rogue. He is the preeminent buyer-beware sports rogue of our time.

Uh-oh. Here he is. "I see my hair, a burning bush basted in righteous juices," he says. "It is only when these spiritual vibrations stop cascading to my brain that I will lose the sense of power that catapults me into prominence and motivates me to towering heights. For now my hair has mastered the universe! When I gaze into the mirror, I never cease to amaze myself. And I say this humbly."

— LEIGH MONTVILLE

Photograph by MANNY MILLAN, 1989


Robert W. Jackson, M
Orthopaedic Surge

37
DR. ROBERT JACKSON

THE FREE EXCHANGE OF IDEAS IS NEVER FREE. AS PAYMENT FOR HIS education in the strange science of arthroscopic surgery, Dr. Robert Jackson had to teach English to Dr. Masaki Watanabe. Twice a week Jackson would show up at the old man's clinic in Tokyo and, over plates of fried eel and rice, go through the conjugations. That was 30 years ago, and even then Jackson suspected he was getting the better deal; anybody might teach English to Watanabe, but only Watanabe, however neglected he was at the time, could revolutionize sports medicine.

Sports medicine? In those days the only practical application of arthroscopic surgery—the insertion of a tubal telescopic lens through a quarter-inch opening that allows damage to be surveyed before and during its eventual repair—was to correct arthritic conditions in Japan's senior citizens so that they might be better able to kneel and squat, important motions in their society. Even so, Watanabe's treatment, which he had learned from his teacher in the 1930s, was largely ignored among his countrymen. When it came to treatment of the knee, the popular thinking was that it was stupid to "look through a keyhole" when you could "open the door"—lay the entire knee bare and really go to work.

Jackson, then 32, had arrived in Tokyo for the 1964 Summer Games as a physician for the Canadian Olympic team. He knew something of knee injuries, mostly that having one would cost an athlete a year of rehabilitation, minimum. More often than not, torn cartilage, which at the time could be fixed only through a large incision, was a career-ending injury. Even worse, those athletes requiring such incisions were often left with more than zipper scars as a reminder of their operations; many were permanently hobbled by the arthritic condition that remained.

But here was this old Japanese fellow, poking into knees, clearing out cartilage and smoothing joint surfaces with hardly any trauma to the knee itself. He explored the joint, then repaired exactly what needed fixing. "It was amazing," says Jackson, who is now the chief of orthopedic surgery at Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas. "There was no guesswork."

Jackson's particular genius was to recognize a wider application for the procedure than Watanabe ever did. Jackson returned home to his new position as team doctor for the Toronto Argonauts of the Canadian Football League. In 1967 he performed the first arthroscopic procedure on an Argonaut. But acceptance of the procedure was slow in coming. "We could only teach it one-on-one," says Jackson. "There were no visual aids, no videos, nothing." It was, after all, a very small hole to peer into. But results begot attention. "Slowly it began to snowball," says Jackson. "We'd start to get a few athletes, athletes with smart business managers or athletes who'd already been cut and not gotten better." A Bobby Orr here, a Willis Reed there—word got out as these celebrity athletes underwent this comparatively minor procedure and then quickly returned to action.

In the mid-1970s the development of fiber optics made arthroscopy much easier to perform, and by 1980 the surgery based on it—whether with the insertion of a small scissors, forceps or rotor blades—was a mainstream procedure. But Jackson can remember that for some time his Japanese import was known by a wholly unscientific-sounding term. "Even as late as 1978, I'd get calls about this 'needle with an eye' operation."

These days the patients become more famous for the surgery than their doctors. Whether it is marathon runner Joan Benoit qualifying for the 1984 Olympics just 17 days after her knee surgery or gymnast Mary Lou Retton remounting the balance beam for the '84 Olympics just days after hers, or any of today's professional athletes who are back in the game soon after injuries that once would have ended their careers, the miracle of arthroscopy is so commonly reported that it's now hard to recall when it was not available. Jackson did not invent the procedure and has not been the only surgeon to popularize or improve the operation. Others have written important papers on the subject; others have developed additional pioneering skills. But somebody had to go to Japan and recognize modern medicine in the hands of an ancient doctor. It was the beginning of a trade deficit that, medically speaking, may never be corrected. — RICHARD HOFFER

Photograph by DANNY TURNER, 1994

VETEMENTS
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LEMOND

38

GREG LEMOND

THE FRENCH CALL GREG LEMOND "LE ROI SOLEIL." AND LIKE LOUIS XIV, the American Sun King has defeated formidable European coalitions, narrowly escaped death and traveled great distances to win fame and glory. LeMond shone most brilliantly from 1986 until 1990, winning the Tour de France all three times he entered. He was both a path and a light, extending the popularity of cycling beyond its European borders and inspiring fellow countrymen to emulate him. Before LeMond, Americans thought of bikes as something you straddled to deliver the paper. Yanks had made as much impact on cycling as the French had made on baseball. Today, U.S. pros are wheeling and able, and cycling is as American as *pomme* pie.

LeMond began setting the pace at the 1980 Olympic trials when he was named, at 18, the youngest captain of a U.S. cycling squad. After the U.S. boycotted the Moscow Games, LeMond turned pro and moved to Europe. Three years later he became the first American to win the professional road race at the world championships. And in '84 LeMond became only the second American to even attempt the Tour de France, finishing third. The next year he placed second to France's fearsome Bernard Hinault, his colleague on the French team La Vie Claire. In '86, at the precocious age of 25, LeMond beat Hinault and became the first (and still the only) non-European to win the Tour, cycling's most prestigious race.

If Louis XIV was the symbol of absolute monarchy in the baroque age, LeMond reigned supreme in the space age. It was LeMond's team that first used the Rock Shox suspension fork to hug the cobblestones of the Paris-Roubaix road race, in 1991. It was he who forsook the standard steel frame for a lighter carbon fiber one to ride the opening time trials in the '92 Tour de France. And it was LeMond who made the best use of tribars, looping clip-on handlebars that kept him in a position not unlike a skier's tuck.

He used this peculiar posture to astonishing effect in the '89 Tour's final stage, a 24.5-kilometer time trial from the House That Louie Built (Versailles) to the Arc de Triomphe, in Paris. Races of Truth are what the French call time trials—and the hard truth was that after 22 days and 2,010 miles, LeMond trailed overall leader Laurent Fignon of France by 50 seconds. Hunched tightly over the tribars, his helmeted head lowered for aerodynamic efficiency, LeMond rode all-out all the way, shooting down the same path that Louis XVI took in 1793. Unlike that Louie, LeMond kept his head.

A gain of one second per kilometer was considered barely possible. LeMond more than doubled that figure to beat Fignon by eight remarkable seconds. LeMond averaged 34 mph—the fastest time trial in the Tour's history. He won with no teammates chasing down opponents. He won with no *domestiques* shielding him from the wind. And he won not so much on talent as on sheer force of will. "I kept thinking . . . what a good thing it was that I never give up early," he said afterward. "That's what it taught me. Never give up."

The Tour de France is the most sadistic sporting event in the world. Its champions are those masochists who can suffer longest. "This sport is about pain," LeMond says. "Your legs, your chest, everywhere. You go into oxygen debt and fall apart. In the Tour de France you push yourself to where you think you can't go. The key is to be able to endure psychologically. When you are not riding well, you think, Why suffer? Why push myself for four or five hours? You have to ignore your inner voice."

Few cyclists have ignored their inner voices with such intelligence and self-awareness. And none ever put his mettle to the pedal so imperially. In April 1987—just nine months after winning his first Tour—LeMond was accidentally shot by his brother-in-law during a turkey hunt at a Lincoln, Calif., ranch. His liver and kidney were hit, his pierced right lung collapsed, and a couple of pellets lodged in the walls of his heart. LeMond almost surely would have died if a police helicopter had not been available to take him to a hospital that specialized in gunshot wounds. "I never thought I'd be the type that needed painkillers," he would say later. "You think you're used to pain on your bike, but that's not pain. The suffering you feel on your bike is nothing

Photograph by DUOMO, 1991

compared to real pain. I think of that sometimes when I ride."

His road to recovery was blocked first by appendicitis and then by shin surgery. After he missed the '88 Tour, LeMond's new team, PDM, asked him to take a $200,000 pay cut for '89. "They had totally lost confidence in me," he would recall. "They said, 'Maybe you're not going to ever come back.' " But the Sun King knew his career had not set. "No matter how dedicated you are, how seriously you train, you need a certain period of time [to get back to top form]," he said. "It's impossible to go straight there."

LeMond is not without his critics. Among the staunchest are five-time Tour winners Eddy Merckx and Hinault, the latter of whom retired after LeMond won the '86 Tour. LeMond, they snipe, lacks panache and subtlety, plays it safe and focuses on the Tour at the expense of the one-day classics and other traditionally important stage races.

"I hear the old guys criticizing me," LeMond said a few years back, "but they don't even know how easy they had it in their day. Now everybody is much better prepared and that much more competitive. People talk about there being no leader in cycling today like Merckx or Gimondi. You know why? Because there are 10 Gimondis and 10 Merckxes in the peloton today."

The enduring image of LeMond will be of a thin, crouched figure climbing up, ever up, an impossibly steep peak in the Pyrenees. His pace is steady, his rhythm inexorable. Just because the American Sun King's reign didn't last as long as his French counterpart's, it wasn't any less divine. — FRANZ LIDZ

Photograph by
PRESSE SPORTS, 1990

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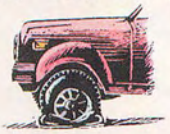

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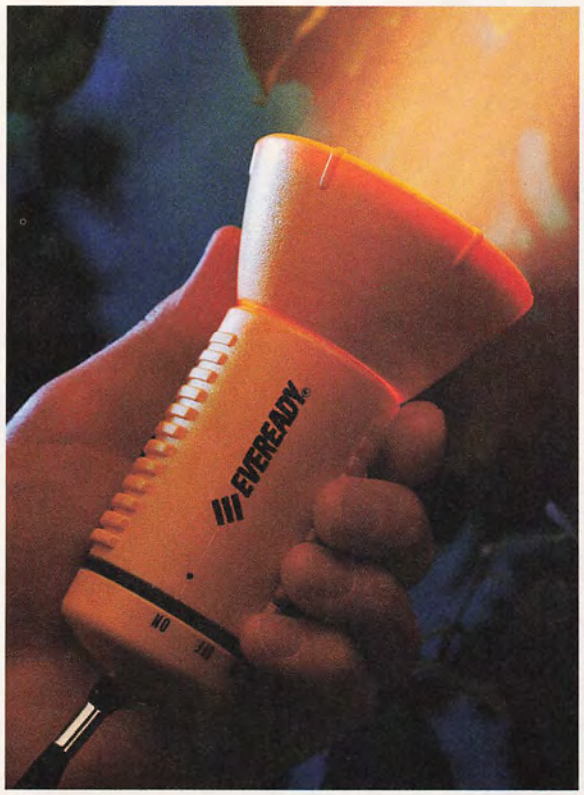

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WFL
WORLD FOOTBALL LEAGUE

39 GARY DAVIDSON

"GARY DAVIDSON," THIS MAGAZINE OPINED IN 1975, "HAS BEEN ONE OF the most influential figures in the history of professional sport." Two years later an editorial in *The Sporting News* asked, "What man, more than any other, has had the greatest impact on professional sports in America? You'd have to say Gary Davidson. . . ." These pronouncements raise a provocative question for today's reader, specifically this: Who in the H-E-double-hockey-sticks *is* Gary Davidson?

The answer: Gary Davidson was a cofounder and the first president of both the American Basketball Association and the World Hockey Association; he also founded—and served as the first commissioner and president of—the World Football League. In the late 1960s and '70s he presided over a parallel sports universe, creating options for athletes in the established leagues that wouldn't otherwise have existed in the days before free agency.

An attorney himself, Davidson and a team of lawyers challenged in court the reserve clauses in pro football and hockey. His "rebel leagues," as they came to be known, triggered acrimonious salary wars with the NFL, the NHL and the NBA; during the short, furious life of the ABA, the NBA's average player salary quadrupled to $109,000. "I was probably responsible for more benefits to the players than Pete Rozelle or any other commissioner," says Davidson, now a real estate developer in Southern California. "But I don't think that will come up much anymore."

No, if remembered at all, his leagues are usually recalled as comical and garish, best symbolized by the tricolored Neapolitan basketballs of the ABA. But Davidson's leagues have contributed so much more of consequence. They attracted the vast talents of Wayne Gretzky and Bobby Hull, Rick Barry and Julius Erving. The NFL has goalposts in the back of the end zone because the WFL did it first. The NBA has the three-point shot because the ABA pioneered the trey.

But most important, Davidson placed franchises in cities that were not previously considered "major league," places such as Winnipeg and San Antonio, Edmonton and Indianapolis. "Walter O'Malley and Horace Stoneham are viewed as being extremely important in the evolution of modern professional sports," says Max Muhleman, a former vice president of the World Football League. "What they did was induce other owners to view the sporting landscape in much larger terms. I can see a lot of that in what Gary Davidson did." Says Tim Grandi, the former associate general counsel for the WFL: "Whether Gary intended it or not, players acquired new freedoms and prosperity that didn't previously exist. He wasn't Moses, but he did take control of professional sports away from a clique of owners and opened it up to more people and cities."

All of which came at great personal cost to Davidson. In 1974, the first and last full season of the WFL—the last of Davidson's rebel leagues, which hemorrhaged $20 million in its first 20 weeks of play—Davidson suddenly found himself bankrupt and adrift. He and his wife also started divorce proceedings in '74, a year he sums up laconically: "I turned 40," he says. "I ended up upside-down about $4 million. And that did not make for a good year."

He is now 60, happily remarried, and happier still to be out of the cutthroat racket of professional sports; he credits his ex-wife for helping him discover God. His world now is very different from what it used to be. Davidson once wrote in his autobiography, published just before the collapse of his empire: "It's winning, almost any way you can, that means the most. It's going into the jungle and surviving."

While his priorities today are less Machiavellian, Davidson had only to turn on his television set recently to see that he might have won after all. The upstart Indiana Pacers, a former ABA club, were the story of the NBA playoffs. The New York Rangers, a team emboldened by erstwhile players from the Edmonton (originally Alberta) Oilers—a charter member of the WHA—are the Stanley Cup champions. The rebel-league legacy is alive in the Canadian Football League, which has crossed the border and put teams in Baltimore, Las Vegas, Sacramento and Shreveport. Gary Davidson left the jungle of professional sports 20 years ago, but he is survived by the ideas he planted there.

— STEVE RUSHIN

Photograph by SHEEDY & LONG, 1974

40
JULIUS ERVING

HIS ADMIRERS FLAILED ABOUT, TRYING TO NICKNAME HIM, GROPING FOR a handle that best captured what it was that he brought to the game. They tried the Claw, Black Moses, Jewel, but none caught on. Finally people came around to something that had been there all along. Back in his old New York neighborhood, in the Long Island town of Roosevelt, the young Julius Erving had called a guy the Professor, and the guy had reciprocated by calling him the Doctor, a moniker by which Erving would ultimately be known to all of the basketball world. Dignified, a practitioner, every bit a professional, Dr. J (an ABA teammate, Fatty Taylor, later added the initial) was as useful for the ideal he represented as for the player he was. "There have been some better people off the court—like a few mothers and the pope," said Pat Riley, who faced Erving while coach of the Los Angeles Lakers. "But there was only one Dr. J the player."

Erving's beginnings hardly prefigured his ultimate hold on the game. Born into the relatively comfortable surroundings of suburban New York, he went off unnoticed to play college ball at Massachusetts. After three statistically impressive seasons performing at UMass in the out-of-the-way Yankee Conference, he was still largely unknown. He attracted enough attention, though, to be drafted by both the fledgling ABA and the NBA. "My god, did you see those meat hooks?" said Al Bianchi, the coach of the ABA Virginia Squires, as he was leaving the 1971 press conference at which Erving's signing with the Squires was announced.

His physical features helped set him apart—not just the hands, but the 6′ 7″ long-stemmed build, and the magnificent Afro that ebbed and flowed with the prevailing fashion. A knack for passing, shooting and even rebounding one-handed distinguished him too. When Erving topped a poll of sportswriters and sportscasters taken at the end of his career to determine the nicest guy in sports, basketball must have fully realized that it had been favored with the presence of a rare figure: someone who embodied the most old-fashioned virtues while performing the most futuristic and apparently superhuman feats. Those feats conferred credibility on the upstart ABA; the NBA had the tradition, the major markets, the network contract, but unless you bought a ticket to an ABA game, you couldn't see *the Doc-ta*. If Erving didn't actually force the 1976 ABA-NBA merger, he was surely the most valuable asset the young league brought to the table. And when Magic and Larry and Michael took charge in the early '80s, all three took their cues for comportment on and off the court from the Doc and his ambassadorial carriage.

Erving's ABA valedictory, the '76 series in which he led his New York Nets past the Denver Nuggets for the league's final championship, may be the least-seen great achievement in sports. With his move to the NBA's Philadelphia 76ers, Erving went public. He was no longer a cult act playing smoky halls half full of aficionados who had become hip to him by word of mouth. And in that public light a question arose: When his NBA career ends, will this surpassingly gifted athlete be able to boast of sports' great affirmation of the team, a championship? Erving had been part of a laughable Philly team, a collection of free spirits that blew a two-game lead to the Portland Trail Blazers in the '77 NBA Finals. From that, Erving suffered. "Winning a championship," he would say, "is the only thing that will erase that." And here Erving drew on that reservoir of goodwill he had engendered over the years. Rather than blaming the Sixers' failures on their star's individualism, fans rooted like hell for him to win the title, which would be the only appropriate capstone to his career. And in '83 the Doctor won his NBA crown. The Sixers clinched it in Game 4 against the Lakers in the most appropriate way possible, with Erving throwing in a dagger of an 18-footer late in the game. "I didn't find that shot," he said. "It found me."

One last time, just weeks before retiring in 1987, he would reach back. Scoring 38 points in a home game against the Indiana Pacers, Erving seemed to anthologize his career. The tomahawk dunks, spin moves and converted alley-oops echoed the Doctor at his height. The finger rolls and feathery jumpers bespoke the Doc in descent. The essence of Julius Erving, the quality that placed him and his game in a category above that of the commonplace juke artists and session jammers, always was his grace.

—ALEXANDER WOLFF

Photograph by NEIL LEIFER, 1977

SIXERS
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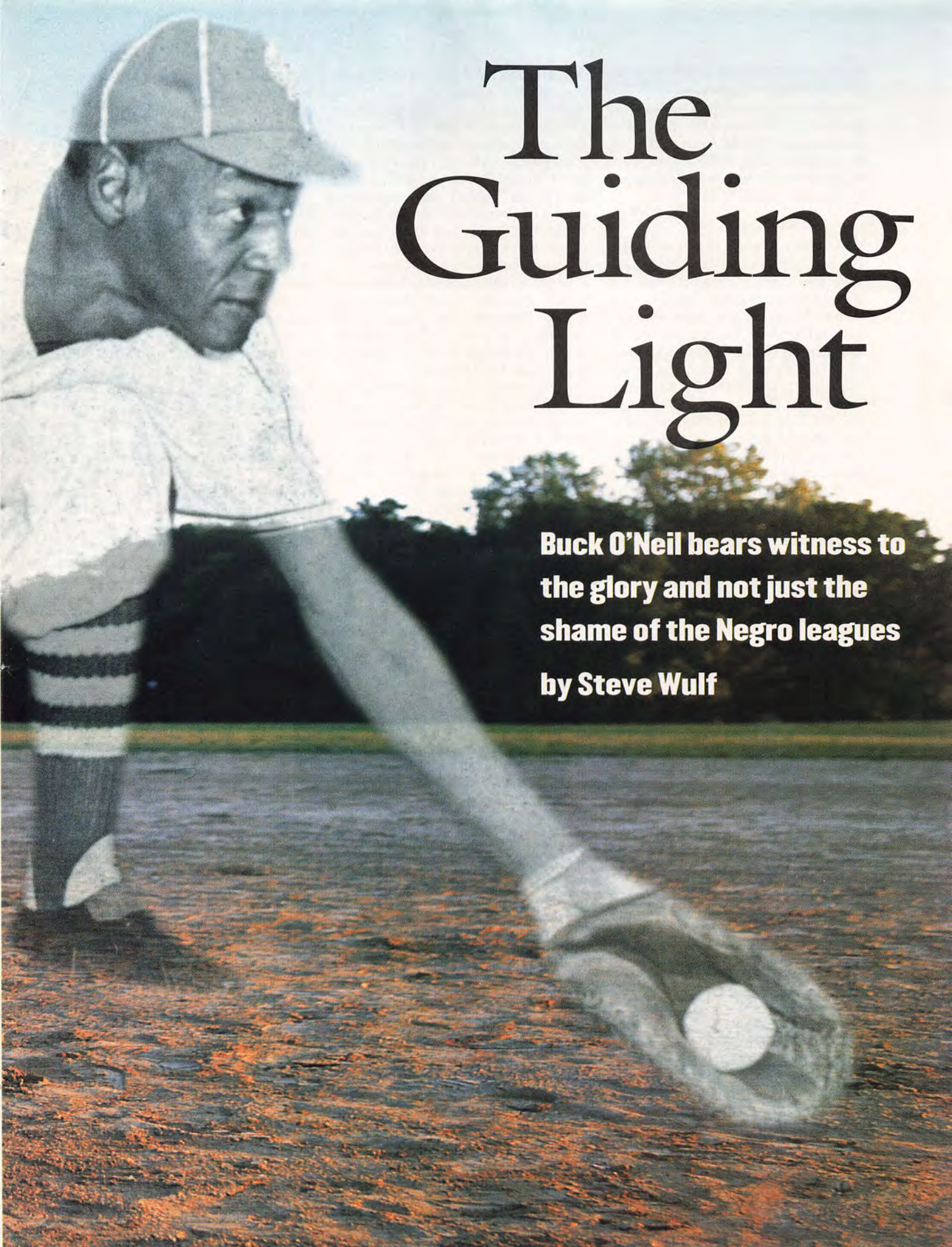
DAVID WALBERG (LEFT); NATIONAL BASEBALL LIBRARY

Content in his role as a pioneer, O'Neil reflects on his playing days without rancor.



The Guiding Light

Buck O'Neil bears witness to the glory and not just the shame of the Negro leagues

by Steve Wulf

Buck O'Neil

There's nothing greater for a human being than to get his body to react to all the things one does on a ball field. It's as good as sex; it's as good as music. It fills you up. Waste no tears for me. I didn't come along too early. I was right on time.

—BUCK O'NEIL

Buck stuck, but he was Foots first. He has also been called Country and Cap and just plain Jay, and while Satchel Paige was alive, he was a man called Nancy.

John Jordan O'Neil, born Nov. 13, 1911, in Carrabelle, Fla., has collected almost as many nicknames during his seven decades in the game as all of the current major leaguers combined. But then he has led so many different baseball lives, and with the exception of that month back in 1937 when he played in a straw skirt for the Zulu Cannibal Giants, all of them have been distinguished.

As a smooth-fielding first baseman for the Kansas City Monarchs from 1938 to '54, O'Neil won a Negro American League batting title (hitting .350 in '46) and played in three Negro League East-West All-Star Games and three Negro World Series. As the manager of the Monarchs from '48 until '55 he won five half-season pennants and shepherded 14 of his players, including Ernie Banks and Elston Howard, into the majors. As a scout for the Chicago Cubs he signed four elected or near-certain Hall of Famers: Banks, Lou Brock, Lee Smith and Joe Carter. In 1962 the Cubs made him the first black coach in the major leagues.

At 82, the still-graceful, still-handsome O'Neil still scouts for the Kansas City Royals. When he's not doing that, or shooting his age over 18 holes, he champions the players and memories of the Negro leagues. But O'Neil is most impressive not for what he does or what he did, but for what he *is*. Banks, who knew O'Neil when, says, "He is a role model, a father, a mentor, a teacher, a *sensei*, a hero, a gentleman, a man. Who do you think I got my let's-play-two attitude from? From Buck O'Neil, that's who."

Hal McRae, the Royals' manager, says, "Buck just makes you feel good. You might be blue, you might be in a slump, but a few minutes with Buck and the world is a wonderful place. Do you know what he is? He's the guiding light."

It's a light that shines on the past as well as the present. The Negro leagues were born because organized baseball wanted nothing to do with integration, and O'Neil and his teammates encountered prejudice daily. But the Negro leagues were also a glorious enterprise well worth celebrating, and that's where O'Neil comes in. He takes particular pride in the Monarchs, and he harbors no bitterness over the fact that he was past his prime when Jackie Robinson finally broke the color line, in 1947. "Buck never curses his fate," says Banks. "He knows that what he did as a player and manager paved the way for the rest of us."

And O'Neil's light shines often in *Baseball*, the nine-inning, nine-night documentary that airs on PBS starting Sept. 18. The film, by Ken Burns of *Civil War* renown, presents a sweeping panorama of the national pastime, and while *Baseball* has much to recommend it, its best moments come while O'Neil is on the screen.

He is at the heart of *Baseball*'s "Fifth Inning," subtitled "Shadow Ball." On one level, shadow ball was the amazingly realistic pantomime of baseball—without the ball—often performed by Negro leaguers before their games. But it is also a metaphor for the black baseball that shadowed the segregated major leagues. O'Neil illuminates those shadows, bringing the Negro leagues to life in all their glory and pain, jazz and blues.

As an eyewitness he links Babe Ruth to Josh Gibson to Bo Jackson. As a confidant of Paige's he reveals a new side to the great pitcher. As a singer . . . well, if you can't watch all 18½ hours of the show, be sure to catch O'Neil during the "Seventh Inning Stretch." He'll take you out to the game.

In 1946, O'Neil (fourth from right) was on Paige's All-Star team, which played 32 games in 26 days.

COURTESY OF BUCK O'NEIL

FOOTS

"How old is this ballpark?" someone asks Jordan Kobritz, the principal owner of the Daytona Cubs.

"As near as anyone can document," says Kobritz, "it's 55 years old."

"Sixty," says Buck O'Neil. "It's at least 60 years old. I played here in 1934 for the Miami Giants, on our way up to face the Jacksonville Red Caps, a *good* team made up of railroad porters. Over there, that's where the Jim

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LEE BALTERMAN

In 1962 the Cubs made O'Neil the majors' first black coach, but he soon fell victim to racial bias.

Crow section of the bleachers was."

The field in question is now known as Jackie Robinson Ballpark because this is where Robinson played his first integrated game in organized ball, as a member of the 1946 Montreal Royals. O'Neil has come to Daytona to rekindle some memories and visit his niece, Sally Griffin.

There's nobody on the field on this June afternoon, but O'Neil can still see the Giants: "That's me over there on first base, 22-year-old Foots O'Neil from Sarasota [Fla.]. On second, Winky James from Key West. Our shortstop is Bill Riggins, who played for the New York Black Yankees, and at third base is Oliver Marcelle. Ollie was a Creole from New Orleans, a fine-looking man. But he got part of his nose bit off in a fight in Cuba, and he had to play with a piece of tape on the nose. He'd been so proud of his looks, so he was never the same after that."

Griffin has brought along some mementos, one a 70-year-old report card from a school in Sarasota for sixth-grader John O'Neil. He earned excellent grades, including an A in personal hygiene, which will come as no surprise to people who know how meticulously he dresses.

Back then he was known as Foots because he had size-11 feet, pretty big dogs for a 12-year-old. He was also a pretty good first baseman, and one day the manager of the semipro Sarasota Tigers asked Emma Booker, the principal-teacher at Foots's small school, if he could borrow the kid for a game. She said yes, and soon Foots, not yet in his teens, was traveling all over the state playing baseball. He also got to see a lot of the white man's game during spring training: John McGraw's New York Giants trained in Sarasota, Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig were based in Tampa, and Connie Mack's Philadelphia Athletics were in Fort Myers.

But there was work to be done, and because his father, John Sr., was a foreman in the celery fields, Foots became a box boy, carrying the crates of celery. "I was considered a good box boy because, while most of the box boys could only carry two crates at a time, I was big and strong enough to carry four," O'Neil says. "I did that for about three years, at $1.25 a day. One day I was having lunch by myself next to a big stack of boxes, and it was so hot, I said out loud, '*Damn*, there has got to be something better than this.'

"It turns out my father and some of the older men were on the other side of the stack having their lunch. That night my father told me, 'I heard what you said today.' I thought he was going to reprimand me for swearing, but he said, 'You're right. There *is* something better than this. But you can't find it here. You're going to have to go out and get it.' "

In those days there were no high schools for blacks in Sarasota, but thanks to the eighth-grade education Booker gave him, Foots was able to get an athletic scholarship to Edward Waters College, a Methodist school in Jacksonville. There they called him Country, and they made him the first baseman on the baseball team and a lineman on the football team. The baseball coach, Ox Clemons, schooled O'Neil so well that the Miami Giants, a Negro semipro team, stole him away in 1934, by which time O'Neil had earned his high school diploma but was still two years short of a college degree. It just so happened that one of the owners of the Giants was a man named Buck O'Neal, although it would be a while before Country became Buck.

In 1935 Marcelle, the third baseman with the taped-up nose, invited O'Neil to join him on a team he played for called the New York Tigers. "We started out in Sarasota, mind you, and we had nothing to do with New York," says O'Neil. "That was just a way to get the people to come to the games. Out where we were headed, nobody was going to know the difference." They were also headed into the Depression, and the Tigers spent the summer and fall chasing after ball games in Louisiana, Texas, Kansas and Colorado, living hand to mouth, hopping freight trains, sometimes relying on O'Neil's pool-playing abilities for money.

O'Neil and Doby Major, another player from Sarasota, decided to go home from Wichita, Kans., that October, and O'Neil's father wired them train tickets. But they had only 75 cents between them for the three-day trip, and used it to buy day-old bread in Chattanooga. By the time they got home, O'Neil says, "our day-old bread was two days gone. When I got home I ate so much, my mama cried."

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Participants subject to change.

Ballpark, O'Neil recalls another adventure from that summer of '35: "One night we had to sneak out of a boardinghouse in Shreveport without paying our bills. But a few months after that, I sent the landlady a check for what we owed her, which wasn't much, maybe $50.

"Many years later I'm passing through Shreveport on my way to scout a player, and I decide to stay at this same boardinghouse. I inquire after the landlady, and a woman says, 'That was my mother. She passed away a few years ago. Did you know her?' I tell the woman my name, and she smiles and leads me into one of the rooms. There on the wall, framed like a picture, is my check. I guess I had restored her mother's faith in us."

BUCK

A hand comes down hard on the shoulder of Ken Burns.

"Can we have Buck back now?"

Burns, who is sitting in the press dining room at Kauffman Stadium on the night of Aug. 3, turns around to see that the hand belongs to the Kansas City vice president for baseball operations, George Brett. "Actually," says Brett, "we don't need him now that we've won 11 in a row. It's when we start losing that we'll need him."

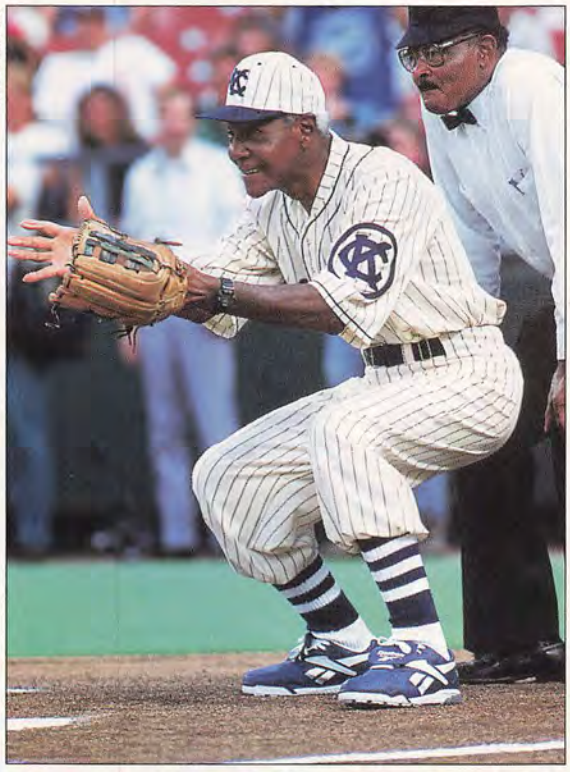
The Royals have given O'Neil time off this summer to help promote *Baseball*, but don't think for a moment that his role with the club is ceremonial. "I depend on him," says McRae. "Whether it be for advice or for information, he's a big help around here." Indeed, when O'Neil walks into the Royals' clubhouse, the room gets a little warmer. He'll do ball tricks with one of the kids, swap stories with K.C. first base coach Lee May or quietly advise a player in a slump.

This night also happens to be Monarchs Night, and the Royals are about to play the Oakland A's while wearing replica uniforms of the 1924 Kansas City Monarchs, who were the first "world champions" of the Negro leagues. This unprecedented homage to a Negro league team by a major league team is a wonderful—albeit overdue—gesture that bridges time, culture, race and spirit.

On the mound to throw the ceremonial first pitch is Burns, dressed in a Monarch jersey. But as he goes into his windup, his catcher, every inch a Monarch, every inch a ballplayer, waves him off. Much to the delight of the crowd, O'Neil takes off his glasses and puts them on Bob Motley, a former Negro league umpire standing behind him. Only then does O'Neil signal for his batterymate to throw the ball.

O'Neil didn't actually become a Monarch until 1938, when he was 26. He had played the '36 season with the Shreveport Acme Giants and most of the '37 season with the Memphis Red Sox. He did spend one month in '37 playing in that straw skirt for the barnstorming Zulu Cannibal Giants. "I was making $100 a month with the Red Sox, and the Giants offered me a lot more, so I jumped," says O'Neil. "Abe Saperstein owned the team, and we didn't think that much about wearing the costume. This was *show* business. At least I didn't have to put on the war paint like some of the guys. Besides, we had trunks on underneath our skirts. A first baseman in a stretch would have been pretty vulnerable without those trunks."

His stay with the Cannibal Giants was memorable for another reason. The promoter for the team, Syd Pollock, had also



DAVID WALBERG

Even in 1994, Monarch blue suits O'Neil just fine.

worked for the Miami Giants when O'Neil played for them, and Pollock somehow confused this O'Neil with that club's co-owner, Buck O'Neal. So he started billing the Giants' first baseman as Buck O'Neil, and the name stuck.

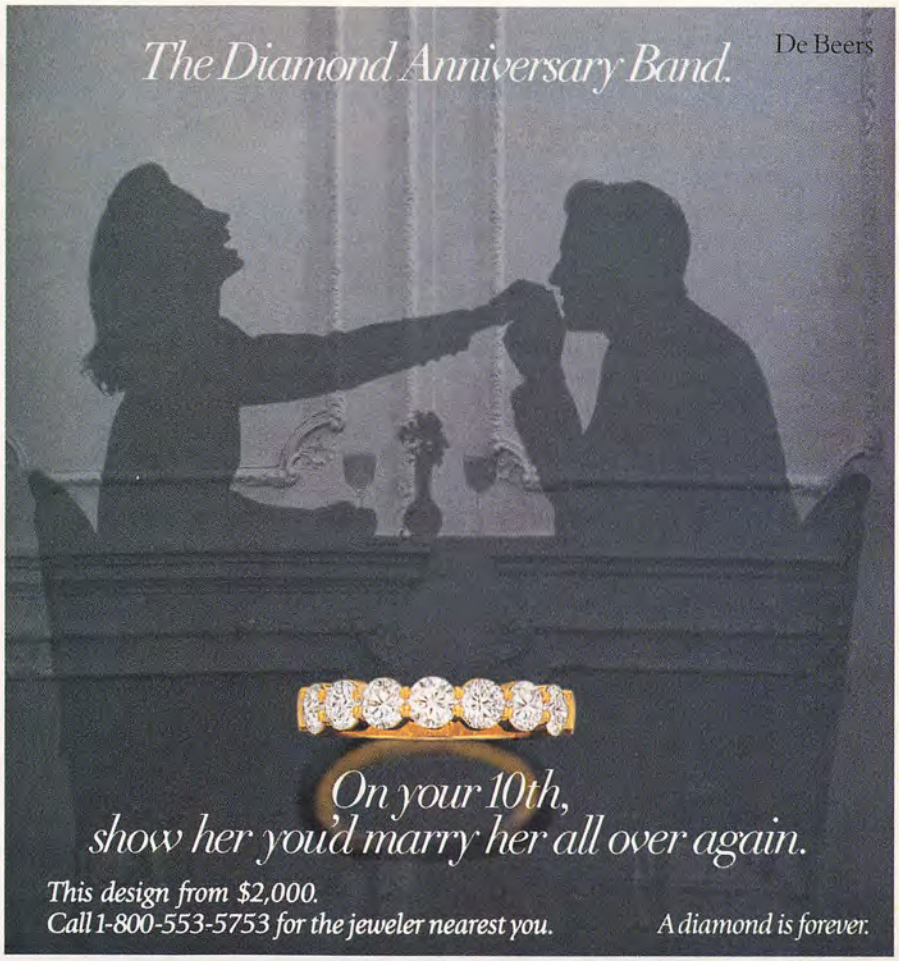
The next year, J. Leslie Wilkinson brought O'Neil to Kansas City. Wilkie, who was the only white owner in the Negro leagues, had had his eye on O'Neil for quite some time, and O'Neil immediately became the Monarchs' starting first baseman and number six hitter. "It hit me my first week with the Monarchs," says O'Neil. "I caught a routine throw from the second baseman, and as I was trotting off the field, I thought, Damn! I just caught a throw from Newt Allen. Newt was one of the greatest players in the Negro leagues back when I was a child."

From 1939 to '42 the Monarchs won four straight Negro American League pennants. They had a number of stars: pitcher Hilton Smith; shortstop and right-fielder Ted Strong, who also starred for the Harlem Globetrotters; and outfielder Turkey Stearnes, a peculiar man who liked to talk to his bats. And in '39 Paige joined them, but that's another two dozen stories.

"We were like the New York Yankees," says O'Neil. "We had that winning tradition, and we were *proud*. We had a strict dress code—coat and tie, no baseball jackets. We stayed in the best hotels in the world. They just *happened* to be owned by black people. We ate in the best restaurants in the world. They just *happened* to be run by blacks. And when we were in Kansas City, well, 18th and Vine was the center of the universe. We'd come to breakfast at Street's Hotel, and there might be Count Basie or Joe Louis or Billie Holiday or Lionel Hampton."

World War II broke up the Monarchs' dynasty, at least temporarily. One of O'Neil's few regrets is that he didn't get to play for Kansas City in 1945, the year Jackie Robinson was a Monarch. O'Neil was then in the Navy, stationed with a black stevedore battalion at Subic Bay in the Philippines. Recalls O'Neil, "We loaded and unloaded ships. I was a bosun with 18 or so men under me. One night at about 11 o'clock the commanding officer gets on the horn and says, 'John O'Neil, please report to my office immediately.'

"I didn't know what he could want. But when I got to his office, this white man said to me, 'I just thought you should know that the Brooklyn Dodgers have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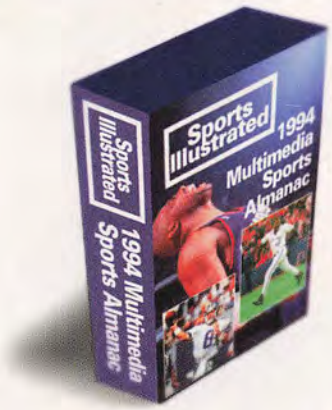

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just signed Jackie Robinson to a minor league contract.' Well, I got on the horn and said, 'Now hear this! Now hear this! The Dodgers have signed Jackie Robinson.' You should have heard the celebration. Halfway around the world from Brooklyn, we were hollering and firing our guns into the air."

After the war O'Neil returned home to Kansas City and married Ora Lee Owen, a schoolteacher from Memphis whom he had met a few years before.

As she did then, Ora is waiting patiently on this Aug. 3 night for John—as she calls him—to return. She is sitting in a private box at Kauffman Stadium while Buck and some of the other Monarch alumni sign autographs outside the stands. The demand for the signatures of these once-forgotten players has been so great that they are still signing an hour and a half after the first pitch of the game.

Finally, after about six innings, the men come back from their grueling autograph session. Rather than looking tired, however, the Monarchs, in their uniforms, actually seem younger than they did a few hours earlier. Is it possible, O'Neil is asked, that a little time spent in a baseball uniform can take years off your age?

"You got *that* right."

NANCY

Standin' in a corner, 18th and Vine.

Those aren't exactly the lyrics to *Kansas City*, but on the morning of Aug. 4 they're close enough. Standing in a corner of the Negro Leagues Museum at 18th and Vine are the now familiar team of Buck and Burns. In their own ways they are eloquent preachers, and they are here to address the audience at a benefit breakfast for the museum. Burns introduces O'Neil as the most remarkable man he has ever interviewed and then adds, "Buck is 82. I'm 41. I guess that makes me half a Buck."

O'Neil tells a story about his 80th-birthday celebration at his church: "There was all this babbling about Buck O'Neil *this* and Buck O'Neil *that*. Just in case any of it went to my head, a young boy I knew came up and introduced his friend to me. He said, 'I want you to meet Buck O'Neil. He's an old *relic* from the Negro leagues.' I said, 'Son, you are *so* right.' "

As he almost always does before such an audience, O'Neil tells a Satchel Paige story. He has a lot of them, always making sure that the absent Paige addresses him as Nancy. There was the time Paige heard an opposing player in Denver call him an "overrated darkie." He told Nancy to bring in the infielders and outfielders and had the seven of them kneel around him as he struck out the side on nine pitches.

But as O'Neil points out in the "Fifth Inning" of *Baseball*, Paige was more than a clown, more than a great pitcher. "A part of Satchel that no one ever hears about," says O'Neil, "is this part of Satchel. We're going up to Charleston, but the rooms weren't ready yet. So he says, 'Nancy, c'mon with me. We're gonna take a ride. . . .' We went to Drum Island [S.C.]. Drum Island was where they had auctioned off the slaves. . . . We stood there, he and I, maybe 10 minutes, not saying a word, just thinking.

" 'You know what, Nancy?' he says.

" 'What's that, Satchel?'

" 'Seems like I been here before.'

"I said, 'Me, too.' "

At the breakfast at 18th and Vine, someone in the audience asks the question everybody wants O'Neil to be asked: "Why did Satchel call you Nancy?" O'Neil smiles the way he must have

smiled at a hanging curveball in 1946.

"We were playing near an Indian reservation in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, on our way to Chicago to play the Chicago American Giants," he says. "Satchel met a beautiful Indian maiden named Nancy, and he asked her if she'd like to visit him in Chicago, and she said sure, so Satchel gave her the name of our hotel. Well, now we're in Chicago, and I'm sitting in the coffee shop of the hotel when I see a cab pull up, and out steps Nancy. I greet her and tell her that Satchel is upstairs, and the bellhop carries her bags to his room.

"A few minutes pass, and another cab pulls up, and out steps Satchel's fiancée, Lahoma. I jump up and say, 'Lahoma, so *good* to see you. Satchel's not here right now, but he should be along shortly. Why don't you sit here with me, and I'll have the bellman take your bags up.' I go over to the bellman, explain the situation to him and tell him to move Nancy's bags into the room next to mine, which is next door to Satchel's. A few minutes later he comes down and gives me the sign that everything is O.K. In the meantime, Satchel has climbed down the fire escape, and lo and behold, here he comes walking down the street. I say, 'Look, Lahoma, here's old Satch now,' and Satchel gives her a big greeting and takes her upstairs.

"That should've ended the trouble, but when we were turning in that night I heard Satchel's door open and close. Then I heard him knock on Nancy's door. I know he wanted to give her some money and apologize. But while he's whispering kind of loud, 'Nancy! Nancy!' I hear *his* door open again, and I knew it was Lahoma coming out to see what was going on. I jumped out of bed, opened my door and said, 'Yeah, Satch. What do you want?' And he said, 'Oh, Nancy. There you are. I was looking for you.'

"And from that day on, Satchel called me Nancy."

CAP

"Hello, Cap," says the former first base coach for the Monarchs.

"Hello, Hamp," says O'Neil.

At a New York screening of the "Seventh Inning" of *Baseball*, the two octogenarians greet each other like long-lost friends. It has been a while since O'Neil has seen Lionel Hampton.

"I loved to watch the Monarchs play," says Hampton, the great bandleader and vibraphonist. "One day in 1948 Cap—that's what the players called Buck—said to me, 'You're around here so much, I might as well put you to work. So Cap let me coach first base for one game, and then he gave me the jersey. It was one of the great thrills of my life."

As strong as jazz and black baseball were in Kansas City in the 1930s and '40s, by the early '50s they had begun to diminish. Nightclubs closed, and the Monarchs, like all the other Negro league franchises, began to suffer because of the integration of the big leagues. O'Neil's job as manager was no longer to win but rather to prepare young black players for their chance at the majors: Banks, Howard, Gene Baker, Pancho Herrera, Sweet Lou Johnson, Hank Thompson.

Before the day-old bread was two days gone again, O'Neil quit the Monarchs after the 1955 season to scout for the Cubs. His job was to find black players in the South, and he put 40,000 miles a year on his car. He discovered Brock when he was a skinny outfielder at Southern University. He tracked down 17-year-old Oscar Gamble in Montgomery, Ala. He also found trouble one night in Jackson, Miss.

O'Neil and Piper Davis, the black scout who signed Lee May, were in Jackson

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looking for a high school game. They saw the lights of a ballpark, pulled into the parking lot and asked the two men at the entrance if this was where the game was. "Oh, yeah, this is where it is, all right," said one. O'Neil and Davis got out of their car and walked to the field. On the mound, though, was not a pitcher but a member of the Ku Klux Klan. The ballpark was filled with men in sheets, and the two scouts made a hasty exit.

In May 1962 the Cubs made O'Neil the first black coach in the major leagues. Although *Ebony* did a big feature on him, the predominantly white media largely ignored his appointment. (SPORTS ILLUSTRATED did O'Neil as a FACE IN THE CROWD.) At the time, the Cubs were in their College of Coaches stage, rotating several different coaches as the head coach (i.e., manager), and John Holland, the Chicago general manager, paid lip service to the idea that O'Neil might one day be the manager.

But the Cubs were never serious about that; they didn't even want him on the coaching lines. Perhaps the one man in this world for whom O'Neil holds any animosity is Charlie (Jolly Cholly) Grimm, the old Chicago first baseman and manager who occupied a front-office position while the college was in session. During a 1962 game with the Houston Colt .45s, both head coach Charlie Metro and third base coach El Tappe were ejected. O'Neil was the logical choice to take over third base, but Fred Martin, the pitching coach, was brought in from the bullpen to man the box. "After 40 years in baseball and 10 years of managing, I was pretty sure I knew when to wave somebody home and when to have him put on the brakes," says O'Neil. "Later I found out that Grimm had ordered the other coaches never to let me coach on the lines."

It wasn't until 1975 that the Cleveland Indians made Frank Robinson the first black manager. In the meantime, O'Neil returned to scouting, signing Smith and Carter, among others. It's no coincidence that O'Neil's four Hall of Fame–quality players—Banks, Brock, Smith, Carter—all share his positive outlook on life. "The measure of a man," says Banks, "is in the lives he's touched."

And, in O'Neil's case, the lives he has preserved. "Sometimes," he says, "I think the Lord has kept me on this earth as long as He has so I can bear witness to the Negro leagues." As a member of the Baseball Hall of Fame veterans committee, O'Neil fulfills that responsibility. He says there are still 10 Negro Leaguers worthy of the Hall. For now, he will settle for just one: Leon Day, an outstanding pitcher and outfielder for the Newark Eagles who's still alive and well at 78 in Baltimore. O'Neil also wants to correct the impression of the Negro leagues left by the movie *The Bingo Long Traveling All-Stars & Motor Kings*. "We weren't a minstrel show," he says. "We didn't just pile into a Cadillac and pick up a game here and there. We had a schedule. We had spring training. We had an all-star game. Most years, we had a World Series. We were professional ballplayers."

DAVID WALBERG

Buck and Ora have been married for 49 years.

Over the years, O'Neil has been a strong force behind many Negro league reunions. In fact, it was at such a reunion, in Ashland, Ky., in 1981, that he spoke those life-affirming, baseball-affirming words: *Waste no tears for me. I didn't come along too early. I was right on time.*

He has also been raising funds for an expanded Negro Leagues Museum, to be built across the street from the current one and next to a new Jazz Hall of Fame. "Wouldn't that be something?" he says. "To see folks flocking to the corner of 18th and Vine again."

JOHN

O'Neil is leading a small caravan to Forest Hill Cemetery in South Kansas City. That's where Paige is buried. It's also where Confederate General John Shelby put up Shelby's Last Stand, and the irony certainly isn't lost on Burns, who visited the cemetery for his Civil War research: "One of the reasons I decided to do *Baseball* after *The Civil War* was that the first real progress in racial integration in this country after Reconstruction didn't come until the Dodgers signed Jackie Robinson."

Paige's gravesite, which he shares with Lahoma, whom he married in 1947, is extraordinary. For one thing, it's on an island of grass in the middle of the cemetery's main road. "Satchel was buried someplace else in the cemetery, but they moved him here so that more people could find him," says O'Neil. "Even after he died, Satchel was on the run."

For another thing, there are portraits of Satchel, who died on June 8, 1982, and Lahoma, who passed away four years later. And on the tombstone are inscribed his famous Rules for Longevity: AVOID FRIED MEATS WHICH ANGRY UP THE BLOOD, etc.

We have to know: "Did Lahoma know why Satchel called you Nancy?"

"Oh, yes," says O'Neil. "She loved the story. She *knew* Satchel. I never would have told the story if she hadn't heard it from him first."

When Paige was buried, O'Neil delivered the eulogy. "People say it's a shame he never pitched against the best," O'Neil said at the time. "But who's to say he didn't?"

It's funny that John Jordan O'Neil is only now being discovered, at the age of 82. But in an age when the racial divide seems to be widening, at a time when baseball is being torn apart, along comes this man to repair some of the damage.

Yes, Buck O'Neil is right on time. ■

OUR BOOTS CAN HANDLE A MOUNTAIN STREAM.

INSIDE **The NFL**

by PETER KING

Advantage, Offense

THE CHICAGO Bulls' Scottie Pippen is driving to the basket, and no defensive player can lay a hand on him. The St. Louis Blues' Brett Hull is steaming toward the goal, and no defenseman can poke-check him. Those scenarios are akin to what has happened in the NFL through the season's first two weeks. The defense is at a decided disadvantage now that officials are enforcing the long-dormant rule that defenders can't touch receivers once they have traveled five yards past the line of scrimmage.

In an attempt to put more scoring and more big plays back in the game, the NFL Competition Committee decided in March to put some teeth into the rule that forbids a defender to make contact with a receiver beyond the five-yard bump zone. The early returns are in, and offenses certainly seem to be benefiting from the decision. The games of the past two weeks have produced an average of 55 more passing yards than the corresponding games last season. Already, Andre Rison of the Falcons has 26 catches. Drew Bledsoe of the Patriots has 801 passing yards. The reason: Aggressive cornerbacks—Cris Dishman of the Oilers, for instance, or Ray Crockett of the Broncos—have adopted a more passive style of play in order to avoid penalties.

"Any wide receiver can get open now," Giant defensive coordinator Mike Nolan said last week. Trying to even the odds, Nolan now has his corners lining up two to three yards closer to the line, to make sure that they can at least jostle the receiver in the bump zone. "A team can get a guy off the street and he can catch balls," Nolan added. "All he has to do is run, knowing he's protected. [Enforcing the rule] has lowered the standards to be a professional."

"The NFL got exactly what it wanted—more offense," Crockett said. "Look at all the receivers running free early in the season."

The thing that bugs defensive backs—and rightfully so—is that offensive players are still allowed to use the same tricks they always have. "All receivers have got what I call the Charles Barkley box-out move, where they turn to the quarterback and back into the defensive back," said safety Ronnie Lott of the Jets. "Now they've got a bigger advantage than ever, because we can't touch them."

Defenders have only one chance to hit wideouts like Viking Jake Reed before they become untouchable.

While preparing to face Michael Irvin of the Cowboys on Sunday, Dishman said, "You look at Michael, and you can see he's an aggressive offensive player. By that I mean, when he runs down the field, he pushes off. In the past, when Michael pushed off, I pushed back. Rod Woodson [of the Steelers] is the same type of aggressive corner I am. I watched Rod on film this week from the Dallas-Pittsburgh game, and four or five times Michael pushed Rod downfield. And Rod couldn't do anything." In the Cowboys' 20–17 win over the Oilers on Sunday, Irvin was held to three catches, but Dishman got more help than usual from a rotating band of Oilers who double-teamed Irvin on most patterns.

It's too early to predict that this rule-tightening will cripple defenses over the long haul. But the NFL is constantly tinkering with the game to balance offense with defense, and it looks as if this passing-friendly rule has tipped the balance significantly toward the offense.

DAVID E. KLUTHO

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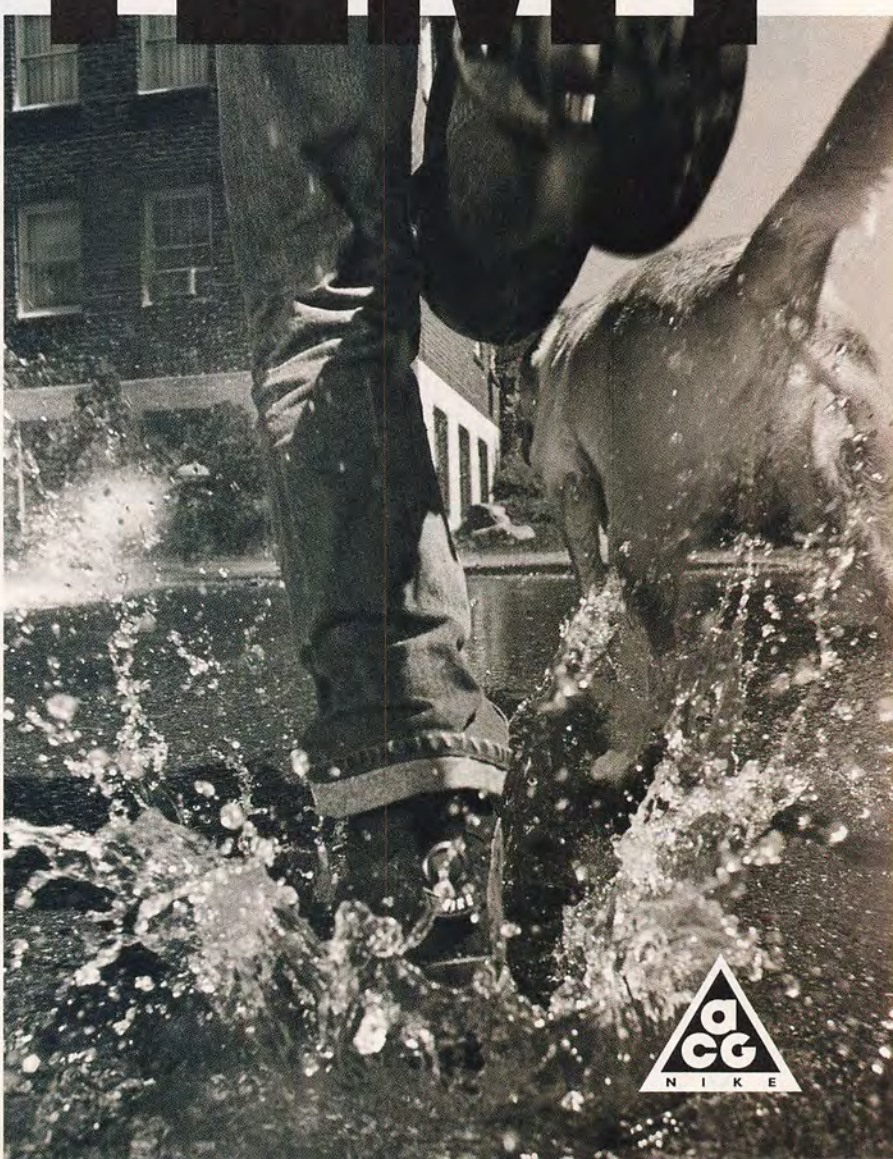


DAMIAN STROHMEYER

Coates (87) has been the end-all for the potent Patriot offense.

The Deuce

George Seifert has been a defensive specialist for his entire coaching career, and the 49er boss is a conservative fellow. But he comes off as something of a radical in an SI poll of coaches on the subject of the two-point conversion, which is new in the NFL this fall. Last week we asked each of the 29 NFL coaches—including Tom Coughlin of the Jacksonville franchise, which begins play next September—what he would do if, with 10 seconds left in the game, his team scored a touchdown that took it to within one point of the opponent: Would he kick the extra point to tie? Or would he go for two to win? The results: Twenty-one coaches said they would kick for the tie; five said that their decision would depend on a number of vague factors; and one, the Falcons' June Jones, said he would go for the tie at home, where the crowd would give his team a lift in overtime, and for the win on the road. Only two coaches, the Bucs' Sam Wyche, a noted iconoclast, and Seifert said they would go for the win. Seifert's reasoning: "I don't want to leave my fate up to a coin flip before overtime."

The NFL hopes that the two-point play will enliven the end of games. But the league's coaches are a conservative lot, and the early numbers on the success of two-point attempts could make them even stodgier. Teams were 22 for 60 (36.7%) going for two in the preseason, and they're eight for 18 (44.4%) after two real weeks.

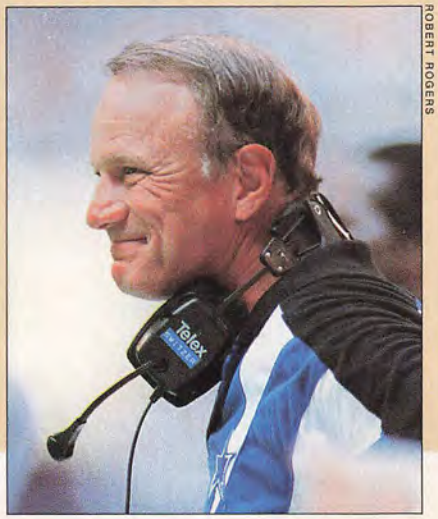
Dispatches

With the Cowboys' win over the Oilers, Dallas coach Barry Switzer, at 2–0, became the winningest rookie coach in the club's history. Tom Landry went 0-11-1 in 1960, and Jimmy Johnson was 1–15 in '89. . . . If Jeff George keeps it up, people may soon forget the awful image he built for himself in Indianapolis. In his first two weeks as a Falcon he is 58 for 75 for 568 yards, with six TDs and no interceptions. . . . Patriot tight end Ben Coates wowed the Bills in Buffalo's 38–35 win on Sunday. "Just send him right to Hawaii [for the Pro Bowl] now," Thurman Thomas said. Coates has 17 catches for 285 yards and four touchdowns after two games, and he's the perfect blocking-receiving tight end for coach Bill Parcells's offense. "When I grow up, I want to be like Ben Coates," said New England tackle Pat Harlow. . . . The Raiders are in trouble after losing 38–9 to the Seahawks at home on Sunday. At 0–2, they have been outscored by a total of 59 points. "Everybody was giving us great reviews," wideout Tim Brown said, "and now we're the worst team in the National Football League." That may be true only if Jeff Hostetler's right arm is really hurting, as a hot L.A. rumor suggests. . . . Coach Pete Carroll is pushing all the right buttons for the 2–0 Jets. As the season began he implored New York fans to become the team's 12th man, and on Sunday he stood before the TV cameras after the Jets' 25–22 overtime win over the Broncos, holding up a football and saying that the game ball was for the fans. "Pete's not dumb," said quarterback Boomer Esiason. "Every winning team has great home fans, and he knows we have to reestablish the fan base here to win." . . . Poor Dave Shula. His 0–2 Bengals have four No. 1 draft choices in the defensive front seven, and they're sackless. "I don't even want to be associated with this," one of the prime picks, end Alfred Williams, said. "There need to be some changes." . . . One of these days some owner is going to be smart enough to give Tony Dungy a head coach's job. The Viking defensive coordinator lost pass rusher Chris Doleman and both starting cornerbacks to the salary cap in the off-season, but Minnesota has made eight sacks and surrendered 19 points, both stats among the best in the league.

The End Zone

In the middle of the fourth quarter at Buffalo on Sunday, around the time that Bill quarterback Jim Kelly was winding up his shredding of the Patriot secondary, a horse owned in part by New England coach Bill Parcells came in an upset winner in the sixth race at Belmont. The horse's name: Nickel Defense. ■

Switzer, the 56-year-old rookie, has already set a Cowboy record.



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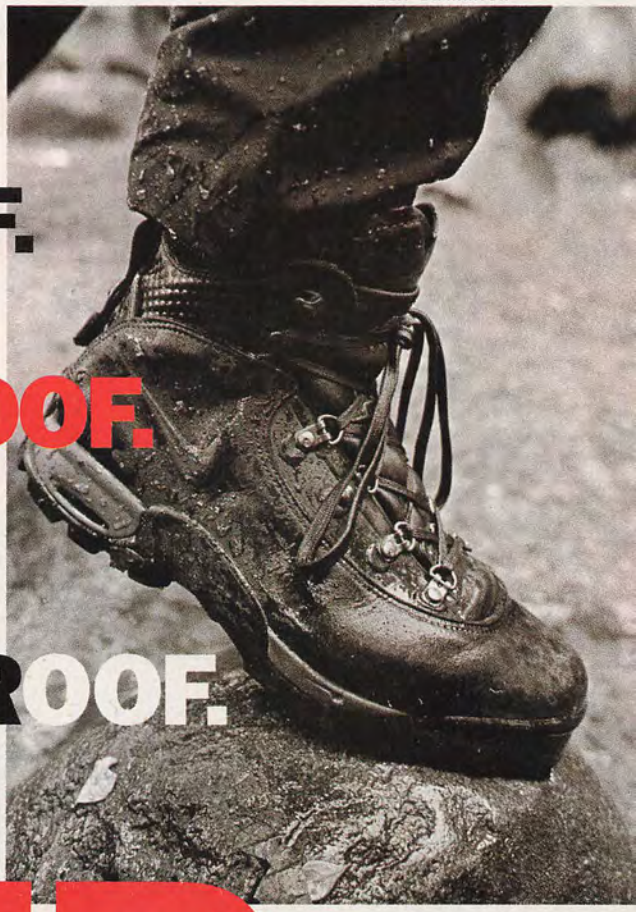

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by JOHN WALTERS

Hidden Talents

JUST HOW difficult is it to run a clean program? Texas A&M coach R.C. Slocum offers this response to that question: "Remember the story of original sin? Two people. One rule. One serpent. And look what happened."

Last January the NCAA (an organization of thousands of rules), having found that nine people (all Aggies) had been paid for no-show jobs during the summers of 1990, '91 and '92, banished A&M to the netherworld of probation. Sanctions included no TV appearances, no bowls and no shot at a fourth straight Southwest Conference title this fall. So what have Slocum's sinners done since? After opening with an 18–13 win over LSU, they went out last Saturday and scorched 15th-ranked Oklahoma 36–14. "People counted us out, but we're on a roll," says senior linebacker Antonio Armstrong. "The NCAA, bowl games, they don't matter. All that matters is these 11 games."

Wait a minute, haven't we heard that before? Why, yes, it was only a year ago that Terry Bowden led Auburn to an 11–0 record while the Tigers were on probation—an achievement that did not go unnoticed by Slocum. During the off-season he asked Bowden for guidance and was advised, "Use the adversity to unify the team and make every game an event."

The Oklahoma game was certainly an event. The Sooners' 44–14 win last year in Norman was the Aggies' lone regular-season loss since 1991, and as senior tailback Rodney Thomas said about this year's meeting, "This was our Cotton Bowl."

Thomas and sophomore teammate Leeland McElroy provide Slocum with an abundance of talent at tailback. McElroy, who last year ran back three kickoffs for touchdowns and averaged 39.3 yards per return, is cited in the A&M media guide as "perhaps the most spectacular player to don the maroon and white ever." And he's the backfield backup. Thomas's 8,439 yards rushing at Groveton High remains the fourth best ever for a high school player anywhere.

Thomas is happy to share the spotlight. In fact he has been known to ask the coaches to give McElroy more carries. But then Thomas's ethics—which he refuses to discuss—are legendary. Two years ago a vending machine in the athletic dorm went berserk, spewing out free candy bars. Thomas, unlike many of his teammates, did not partake of the windfall, but waited for the horde to disperse and then inserted all his spare change into the machine.

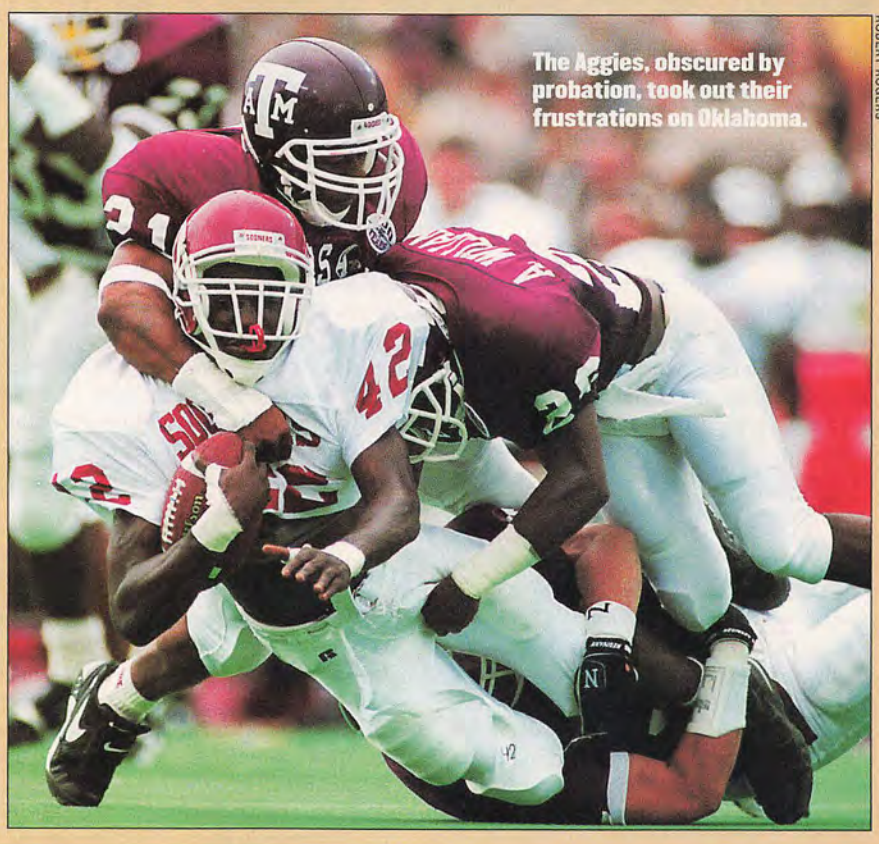
Tailbacks like Thomas and McElroy and, before them, Greg Hill and Darren Lewis, have helped Slocum put together a 29-1-1 home record and a 51-12-1 overall mark since he took over in College Station six years ago. And what have these achievements brought the Aggies? Around the country they are still known more for sinning than for succeeding.

"We're a lot like Willie Nelson," says Slocum. "Texans always knew that Willie was a gifted musician. We just had to wait for the rest of the country to catch up."

Questions Answered

Going into Penn State's game against 14th-ranked Southern Cal, Nittany Lion fans had some questions. Could the defensive line, which had only one starter back from last season, stand up to top competition? Was the team deep enough to survive a tough game? Even though three players were listed in the program as starters at tailback, could anyone doubt who was really No. 1?

By the end of the first quarter Penn State led 21–0, and all three questions had been answered. The defense was dominating the line of scrimmage; the Lions



The Aggies, obscured by probation, took out their frustrations on Oklahoma.

ROBERT ROGERS

were substituting freely and still taking it to the Trojans; and tailback Ki-Jana Carter had started and already rushed for 67 yards and a touchdown.

Although last season he ran for 1,026 yards—the most ever by a Penn State sophomore—Carter has been listed as a costarter with classmates Mike Archie and Stephen Pitts. And while he finished with 119 yards against USC, after having rushed for 210 yards against Minnesota in the season opener, Carter's name will still

CHUCK SOLOMON

Carter convinced Southern Cal and almost everyone else that he is the Nittany Lions' No. 1 tailback.

be followed by that pesky "or" on the most indecisive depth chart in college football when the Lions go against Iowa this weekend.

Just as Penn State's 38–14 demolition of the Trojans was answering those questions of Nittany Lion fans, another one came up: What does OG ETATS TAEB CSU mean? Answer: It was the failed effort of the flip-card section at Beaver Stadium.

—J.B. MORRIS

Great Expectations

Could it possibly be that the Prairie View (Texas) A&M Panthers, who had a 36-game losing streak entering Saturday's game at Arkansas–Pine Bluff, had become overconfident? In their season debut, at Texas Southern a week earlier, the Panthers had come within two yards of a game-tying touchdown as time ran out. Afterward, Prairie View senior linebacker Alphonse Provo was heard to say, "There are a lot of good 10–1 teams out there."

What's more, Prairie View had revenge as motivation. The Panthers, a Division I-AA team, were still a tad indignant that Pine Bluff, an NAIA school, had spoiled their homecoming last season by beating them 12–8. "We want some payback for that," said wide receiver Kerwin Owens.

Meanwhile, a Houston television station was all set to report on the Panthers' triumphant return. Alas, they lost 51–0.

Although they did not return as victors, they did not hang their heads. Says coach Ron Beard, "These guys aren't losers. Losers are people who quit. These guys will be at practice on Monday."

Mixed Signals

It's not whether you win or lose. . . . SMU, which had its football program shut down by the NCAA in 1987 and '88 for myriad violations, was 2-7-2 last fall under coach Tom Rossley. This summer, interim athletic director Bill Lively tore up Rossley's contract and extended it for five years—with a 25% raise. Why?

"Tom has built the football team with student-athletes who will graduate," says Lively, neglecting to mention that Rossley, who is in his fourth year with the Mustangs, has also turned SMU into a respectable team that almost upset UCLA at the Rose Bowl on Saturday. "This says that we believe in Tom's values and in what he's trying to accomplish."

Yes, it *is* whether you win or lose. . . . Three weeks ago Virginia Tech coach Frank Beamer, who is in his eighth season in Blacksburg, received a written agreement calling for a five-year contract extension. But unlike Rossley's extension, Beamer's is conditional: It takes effect only if the Hokies finish with a winning record this fall. Never mind that Beamer has made Tech a Top 20 team. "We're just being honest," says athletic director Dave Braine. "Frank's doing what he's supposed to do, and I'm protecting the interests of the athletic department, which is what I'm supposed to do."

Dynamic Duo

What distinguishes Florida freshmen roommates Reidel Anthony and Fred Taylor from Elmer Fudd—other than their athletic talents and their proficiency in pronouncing the letter *r*—is their success in catching bunnies. "After the sugarcane harvest, the farmers burn the fields," says Taylor, who, like Anthony, grew up in a small town on the shore of Lake Okeechobee. "The rabbits scatter, and we chase 'em."

Like the rest of the Gators, Taylor and Anthony are now chasing records. After two games Florida's offensive numbers are downright mind-boggling: 7.4 yards per snap and 19 touchdowns in 28 possessions. After the Gators routed Kentucky 73–7 last week, Wildcat defensive back Steven Hall said, "It was almost like we were playing a Sega game, but we couldn't press reset."

Against Kentucky, Taylor, a tailback, carried 15 times for 88 yards, and Anthony, a split end, caught a 65-yard touchdown pass. The two have been teammates and friends since the fifth grade. Taylor has always been a running back except for a two-year hiatus that began during sixth

Players of the Week

Offense

Central Michigan running back Brian Pruitt, a senior, rushed for 274 yards and three touchdowns on 24 carries in the Chippewas' 35–23 victory over UNLV.

Defense

Reggie Tongue, a junior safety at Oregon State, made 10 tackles and intercepted three passes, two of which he ran back for touchdowns, in the Beavers' 44–31 defeat of Wyoming.

Small Colleges

In a 53–28 win over California (Pa.), senior Chris George of Glenville (W.Va.) State had 12 catches to become the alltime collegiate reception leader, with 315, passing Jerry Rice.

BILL FRAKES

Florida freshmen and boyhood buddies, Taylor (left) and Anthony share an affection for hare-raising chases.

grade in Belle Glade. "On one carry Fred got stuffed," recalls Anthony, "and he'd heard a rumor about this kid on the other team who had an iron helmet." Says Taylor, in confirmation, "Yeah, Chris Cunningham. I quit after that game and didn't play again until eighth grade." He came back with a vengeance. At Glades Central High he averaged 10.3 yards per carry.

Anthony had no reason to fear anyone or anything growing up. His dad, Clarence, is the mayor in his hometown of South Bay, and his mom, Kathleen Collie, totes a rifle at work. She's a guard at Glades Correctional Facility. "I've always had someone looking out for me," says Anthony, who returned eight kicks for touchdowns at Glades Central.

So which player is better? "They're both so gifted," says Florida coach Steve Spurrier. "It's impossible to say."

That would be like splitting hares . . . uh, hairs.

Express Male

Washington tailback Napoleon Kaufman's stupendous speed (4.31 in the 40-yard dash) is matched only by the speed of his Heisman hype. On the evening of Sept. 3, a few hours after Kaufman had run for 152 yards on 26 carries in the Huskies' 24–17 loss to Southern Cal in Los Angeles, Washington's assiduous sports information director, Jim Daves, mailed postcards with Kaufman's stats to schools and media across the nation. Upon returning to his office two days later—on Labor Day—Daves found a fax awaiting him from Tim Bourret, the sports information director at Clemson.

"Got your postcard," Bourret wrote. "How did you ever pull this off?"

Says Daves, "Let's hear it for the United States Postal Service." ■

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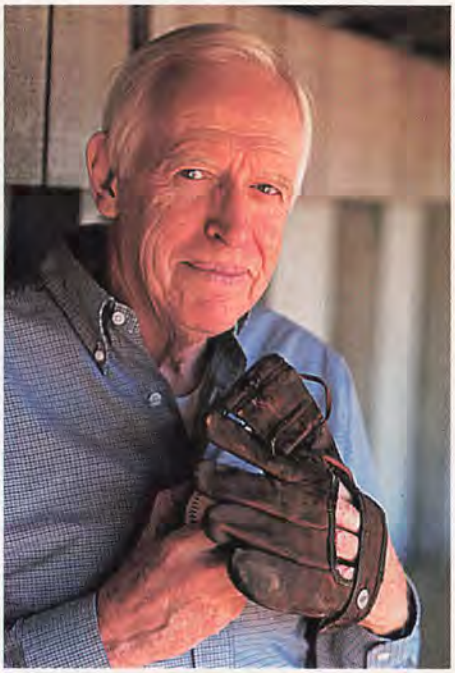
It Was a Small World, After All

On second look, an original SI staffer sees that sports 40 years ago were very different

by Robert W. Creamer

O.K. FORTY years ago, middle of the 1950s. SPORTS ILLUSTRATED was in its first year, and I was a writer on the magazine. Now someone has asked me about things back then: What was the world of sports really like in 1954?

Someone, hell. The managing editor of this magazine is the one who asked me, and I'm trying now to get it right, to remember clearly. If I don't really think about it, sports today seem just about the same as they were then. A little different, sure, but baseball is still baseball, football is football. It's five on a side in basketball, and hockey is still played on skates. Tennis tournaments boil down to final matches, and golf balls still find their way onto the green and into the cup. Runners run, fighters fight, horses gallop. You're pleased when your team wins, pissed off when it loses, and a star athlete is still a star.



JOHN IACONO

Wait a minute. I couldn't have written "pissed off" 40 years ago, and yesterday's "star" is a "superstar" today. Wait, now. The differences are crowding in. Boxing seemed more legitimate then, and tennis was amateur, at least on the surface, and so were the Olympics. Professional sports weren't nearly as widespread—or lucrative. Baseball had only 16 major league teams (including one called the Washington Senators), and all 16 were based in the northeast quadrant of the country.

The NFL had only 12 teams, the NBA eight, the NHL six. The various sports seasons dovetailed, each getting out of the way as another came along. Baseball began in mid-April and lasted until the World Series ended early in October. (In 1954, SI's first year, the Series was over on Oct. 2.) That cleared the stage for college football, which didn't really hit full stride until the third or fourth Saturday in September (pro football began quietly a week or so later). Most college teams were finished playing before Thanksgiving, and pro football's season ended in December with a title game between the two conference champions. No division leaders, no wild cards, no playoffs, no Super Bowl, and only 10 colleges received bids to big bowl games. Football was pretty much out of the way by the time hockey and basketball got up to speed. In turn, by early spring those sports were done as the opening week of the baseball season started the cycle once again.

Despite the rhythmic sharing of the sports year by the so-called major sports, and despite occasional spikes of intense interest in boxing, horse racing, golf, tennis and the rest, there were really only two major sports: baseball and college football. No other pastimes could grab the emotions of the country the same way. All other sports were, in a sense, minor. (SI and television helped to change that.)

Pro football was gaining popularity, but college football was still much bigger. Basketball? The college game aroused local excitement, but the NCAA tournament was a modest affair that was over in two weekends. During SI's first year the NBA dropped from nine teams to eight, with franchises struggling in such off-line places as Fort Wayne, Ind., and Syracuse, N.Y. Hockey was a regional, Canadian-oriented sport. Tennis, particularly women's tennis, was much less widespread. Golf was golf.

Baseball was my favorite sport then, as it is now, and the differences 40 years have wrought in it stand out in my mind. In 1954 the players were still bound by the reserve clause, and a strike was a pitch over the plate. A big league rookie didn't make any more than I did as a rookie writer. Shoes were black and uniforms white, with only a little color trim.

Not only were the uniforms white, but most of the players were too. There had been a handful of African-American stars in the big leagues for almost a decade, but still the great majority of big leaguers were Caucasian. Not that baseball was alone in that. There were no blacks at the big football colleges in the South, and only a handful elsewhere. Pro football was mostly white, and so was basketball, both college and pro. Bill Russell led the University of San Francisco to the NCAA title early in 1955 and went on to be the heart and soul of the Boston Celtics, but most of Russell's teammates during his early years in Boston were white. Blacks were arriving, but they weren't really here yet.

Early in 1955 we ran a cover photo of Willie Mays and his manager, Leo Durocher, standing on either side of Durocher's movie-star wife, Laraine Day. Day had her arms lightly resting on the shoulders of the two men as all three smiled for the camera. As a result, we received a batch of furious letters castigating us for running a picture of a white woman with her arm around a black man.

Maybe those were the good old days, but I'm not so sure about that. ■

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